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THE

OXFORD SPY,

IN

FOUR DIALOGUES

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WITH

AN INTRODUCTION.

J. S. Boone

" ..... Nothing extenuate,
" Nor set down aught in malice."

FOURTH EDITION.

OXFORD:
FOR MUNDAY AND SLATTER, HERALD-OFFICE;
AND SOLD BY LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME,
AND BROWN, LONDON.
1819.

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

WHOEVER has written anonymously, has without doubt, according to his natural temper, and his previous expectations, been mortified or amused by the various judgments which are formed of his effusions; by hearing the same opinion attacked and defended; and the same expressions applauded and ridiculed. The impartial decisions, which are then given, may, however, be of much use to him who, with the unlucky mania for composition, is really desirous of improvement, and willing to form a true estimate of himself. Such at least, in my own case, has been at once my motive for writing, and my motive for concealment. The following Dialogues are the mere lucubrations of some idle evenings, and therefore cannot have been writ-

upon a system in general; and whether that which we at first consider as evil in itself, is not generally conducive to the good of the whole. The result of my inquiry has not disappointed the expectations which I had formed; it has convinced me that some apparent defects are equally useful in the natural, intellectual, and moral world; and that it is as necessary that there should be a mixture of abuse and imperfection in the institutions which men frame, as that there should be a portion of impurity in the air which they breathe. To place this matter in the clearest light, let us take a passing survey of mankind in general; and if the course of things were changed, consider for a moment what would be the result. Foreign and domestic quarrels, disturbance, and disease, are universally supposed to be among the most melancholy incidents which occur in the tragic farce of our existence. Yet without war, what becomes of our soldiers? How discontented are

they at present, and how well the nation follows their example!—If there were no diseases, our physicians would be undone:—if the litigious spirit of the people were extinguished, our lawyers must wear their insignia for nothing, without fees, without dignity, and without employment. If there were no political dissentions, what stop is there to the despotism of men in power, or what theme for the patriot speeches of men in opposition? And lastly, if there had never been any disputes about religion, we should not have been blessed with the mighty labours of the Fathers of our Church. In the same way, the errors and deficiencies of this famous University, have alone given room for the ingenuity and ability which have been employed in their defence; and brought to light that admirable firmness which has displayed itself for two hundred years in a magnanimous defiance of argument and derision, and a glorious contempt of the opinion of the world. I,

therefore, hasten to offer these remarks, which otherwise would not have been written, as a full recantation of some mistaken notions contained in the Dialogues; and as the best method of declaring that I am now a most loyal and orthodox son of the mighty mother, ready at all times, and in all places, to assert the superiority of Logic over Natural Philosophy, and the system of Aristotle over the system of Bacon. For the sake, however, of the younger members of the University, I am willing to expose my own weakness, by laying before them the monstrous and heterodox sentiments which I formerly entertained, that they may be convinced into what abominable heresies the mind must necessarily fall, when it indulges the pernicious habit of thinking for itself. We are obliged, indeed, occasionally to hear such assertions as the following:—"Philosophy, wisdom, and liberty support each other; he who will not reason is a bigot: he, who cannot, is a fool; he, who dares

not, is a slave:" but we immediately discover them to be dangerous and delirious; and mark the writer as a man, whom the ancients would have invited to drink hellebore at Anticyra, and our own countrymen would send, with more humanity, to live in Bedlam, on "bread and bastinadoes." It must then be carefully remembered, that the opinions which will be here expressed, are those upon which I now look back with shame and compunction, and are merely brought forward, like the drunken Helot, as an exhibition and a warning to youth and inexperience.

It may be requisite to premise, that in any remarks upon the discipline of Oxford, I mean not the slightest idea of comparison, having but little acquaintance with the institutions of other places, and but little reverence for the system of Cambridge. Viewing education in a political light—the light, undoubtedly, in which it ought

to be viewed—the studies of the rival Univer[illegible] can hardly be considered as preferable to o[illegible] own: the mind is as little fitted for the bu[illegible] of life by Greek Odes, and Greek Iambics; and the investigation of mathematical truths, until i[illegible] is incapable of reasoning upon human probabi[illegible] lities; as by logical disquisitions, and disgustin[illegible] minutiæ of detail in the perusal of the ancie[illegible] authors. In defence of these latter points, it i[illegible] commonly urged, that the chief purport of edu[illegible] cation is, to inure the mind to habits of accurac[illegible] in reading, and precision of thought: yet, allow[illegible] ing this to be true as far as it goes, it is difficu[illegible] to conceive how the end can be attained, unt[illegible] the mind is furnished with a large stock of idea[illegible] to arrange, dispose, and afterwards produce [illegible] the proper moment; and it can scarcely be de[illegible] nied, that there are many exercises which wi[illegible] at the same time teach it to think, and store i[illegible] with materials for thinking. If a man were asked which was the most perfect mode of edu

...ation, he might say at once, that which settles the principles, while it improves the intellect; which forms the best men, and the most useful members of society, and renders them most competent to perform their part on the great ...ne, in which they will soon be engaged. The ...titutions of our own, or any other University, ...e means, not ends; they are a preparation, ...t not a completion; their studies, honours, ...d advantages, are worth nothing, but as they ...rve towards advancement in life, and are an ...rnest of greater exertions, and higher fame, ...hen the race is run on a more ample space, ...d with a greater number of competitors. I ...peak, of course, merely of such as go into the ...world in any civil capacity; and not of those ...ho are received to the bosom of the church, or ...main as tutors in the University.

...

Keeping, therefore, this view of the subject, ...y intention to offer a few remarks upon

our system abstractedly, and unconnectedly, without any regular detail, and leaving out of the question as much as possible whatever has been said before upon it, either on the one side, or on the other. Let me, however, first observe, that if we allow the system to be good, we must certainly allow it to be well administered. The tutors in most of the colleges are men of great abilities and attention to their office; and the Collections at the end of each Term are sometimes not altogether a name. But the dispute rests upon measures, and not men; and all the care which is employed to maintain a discipline radically bad, can do nothing, but extend the magnitude of the misfortune, and perpetuate its duration. Many of our institutions are at this day as useless, and as superfluous, as the directions in the statute book; and it is surely much to be wished, that some man of authority from his station, or of weight from his abilities, would endeavour to remove

men; with spirit, yet with temper; with moderation, yet with decision.—Like all other Reformers, he might at first perhaps be considered as a visionary, or a hypocrite: his talents might be underrated, and his motives vilified; but he will receive the thanks of the University, and will have the satisfaction to reflect, that he has at least made some use of his reason, and may, by possibility, do some service to the community. Dr. Johnson remarks, that "he, who suffers not his faculties to lie torpid, has a chance, whatever be his employment, of doing good to his fellow-creatures."

Immediately on his arrival at Oxford, the Undergraduate, if he is engaged at all, is engaged in preparing for the first public Examination; the object of which Examination is stated to be, to try his acquaintance with the construction and idiom of the Greek and Latin languages. This design is certainly useful, and

the more praiseworthy, as the stoutest champion for the system of this place will hardly affirm that it is, on the whole, conducive to improvement in accurate and critical scholarship. For my own part, I am perfectly convinced, that in any competition, which depends upon these points, the candidate will have a better chance of success, if he is but just come from a public school, than if he is already of three years' standing in the University. Nor can any rational objection be made to the introduction of Euclid into the Responsions, although we may sincerely regret that Logic, that "ruling passion" of the place, so frequently intrudes itself even in this early stage of the academical career. But it is, of course, often brought up in the first Examination, because it is a *sine quâ non* for the second; and fastens itself upon the Gownsman through the whole period of his residence; like the guard which a man has to attend him through a dangerous country, but of which he

is very glad to get rid for ever, as soon as he arrives at the frontiers of another. Although without the smallest expectation that these desultory observations will have any effect, where reason and ridicule, satire and sense, the contempt of every wise man out of Oxford, and the disapprobation of two-thirds of the literati within it, have exhausted their efforts to no purpose; I yet enter my protest against Logic, as both a negative, and a positive evil of the most serious importance. It is a negative evil, as it consumes, in idle and tiresome disquisitions, the time which might be much better employed in useful acquirements, or rational recreations: it is a positive one, as it fatigues and confuses the mind, without improving or strengthening it, until it is lost in the labyrinth of mood and figure; attends more to the form of a sentence, than to the meaning which it contains, and is impeded by some unwieldy mode of proof, instead of going straight forward according to the

plain dictates of common sense. The defence which is usually urged is, that Logic is a practical method of detecting fallacies in argument: but this, I suspect, in the first place, to be a mere sophism, or indeed, as arrant a piece of quackery as the plan of teaching history by a pack of cards, or the artificial memory of a German Professor: and, in the second, it can undoubtedly only be of use when it is perfectly understood. But few Undergraduates, or even Graduates of the University, can perfectly understand it; and the unhappy Logician suffers all the mischief and inconvenience of a man who has arms put into his hands, of which he is not well acquainted with the use: he will soon find that he cannot bring his syllogisms to bear upon the affairs of the world; that the intrigues and uncertainties of life supply him with but little necessary matter for the exercise of his ingenuity; and that he must either come to no conclusion at all, or arrive at it by the more

simple process of judgment and induction. There is one remark, connected with this subject, which seems to me worthy the most serious attention, and on which I can hardly write with temper and moderation. It is well known, that more men fail in both Examinations on the point of Logic than on any other, or, perhaps, than on all the rest, when taken together. Thus it happens, that, frequently, not only are the feelings of an individual wounded, his hopes thwarted, his prospects injured, his confidence in himself destroyed, and a corroding recollection fixed in his heart for life, but deep uneasiness caused in his whole family on account of a branch of study which is difficult of attainment, and worse than useless when it has been attained. This is not declamation, but fact: it has happened often, and will happen as often again; and at this present time, we see it every day before our eyes: surely, too, it is but mockery of consolation to say, that it passes "*sub*

silentio;" when it may be confidently asserted, that there is no kind of pain or anxiety, which a man would not gladly exchange at the moment for the bitterness of that feeling, and which he would not afterwards remember with less mortification. Soon, however, the Examiners may perhaps be made sensible, that, by their present system, they defeat their own ends; that this greatest exertion of their power will, if too often repeated, be treated with derision; and that nothing will be considered as disgrace, which is suffered in such a cause.

If we proceed to the second Examination, we meet immediately with Logic; no longer a matter of choice, but of necessity. Divinity very properly is the same; and if the higher honours are desired, two or more Treatises of Aristotle. Here again is shewn the wonderful talent of the legislators of Oxford in choosing the most intricate and perplexing course of study, when, after

all, in the present stage of science, the reward is not proportionate to the labour. They, undoubtedly, display great depth of thought, and acuteness of reasoning for the time in which they were written; but if, since that period, mines of knowledge have been opened far richer, and by no means so dark; if Locke, Bacon, Paley, and Blair, have furnished materials for thinking on the same subjects with more facility and at least equal advantage, common policy and common sense tell us at once, which is to be rejected, and which are to be retained. Aristotle is suspected of having burnt some of the works of his predecessors to make his own discoveries appear the greater; but if he was really as warm an admirer of truth as he pretended to be, and could now see the modern improvements in moral and natural philosophy, he might himself rejoice at the progress of science, and exult, on the Spartan principle, in losing the post of honour. In his own age he

kept the lamp of learning in its full lustre: let him now pass it on, and view it in the hands of others, burning with undiminished steadiness and augmented brilliancy. But upon this subject it is needless to enlarge: the system of Aristotle can be hardly in less repute than it now is among the greater part of the learned world; and it is maintained here on that account with the greater pertinacity and resolution. Let me only remark, that it is not the wisest plan to weary the mind with investigations, superfluously difficult and disagreeable; and to exact an unnecessary degree of minuteness and accuracy in the knowledge of them: many young men who bring with them to Oxford a strong ardour for distinguishing themselves, and ambition for literary fame, leave it with disgust and indignation, or sink from activity to idleness, from idleness to dissipation, and from dissipation to its general consequences, debt and disquietude.—Yet if we turn to the other

branches of the Examination, we shall find this attention to useless minutiæ pervading the whole circle, and destroying that wide and manly spirit of inquiry which is the first requisite in all liberal education.

Leaving for the present every other consideration, it may be confidently asserted, that there is a most tedious sameness and confinement in the very course of our classical studies. I am ready to follow the rule of Cicero, and in treating of any set of men take for examples the best which can be found: yet, when we have done so, we see them invariably bringing up the same books, and following in every point the same plan of reading;—for this simple reason that all others are discouraged. Plato, Aristophanes, Demosthenes, Longinus, Tacitus, and Cicero himself, with many other authors of almost equal excellence, are now scarcely mentioned in our schools: a man, who gains the highest hon-

ours, must have a perfect acquaintance with all the important and decent fables of Herodotus and Livy, yet may have, at the same time, so little insight into the general tenor of Grecian and Roman history, as to think the one concluded with the Peloponnesian war, or the battle of Mantinea; and the other of no consequence whatever after the defeat of the Samnites. The whole periods, which contain the reigns of Philip, Alexander, and his successors;—and from the first Emperors of Rome to the taking of Constantinople—certainly not the most uninstructive and uninteresting ones in the annals of nations—are altogether neglected, or unknown: the Examiner, with the usual cant, that it is better to learn little well, than much inaccurately, seldom takes a wide view of the subjects; but confines his questions to the details of some trivial point, which the more sensible Undergraduate perhaps scarcely deemed worthy of his time and attention. The consequences, generally

speaking, are his failure and disappointment; while the Examiner may say in his defence, that this method is absolutely necessary, where the same authors are always introduced; and in a public *vivâ voce* Examination. To this, however, we have only to retort, why, then, are the same authors always to be introduced? Why must the Examination be public; and why must it be *vivâ voce?* Industry, we must allow, is a quality which in every system of education must meet with reward; but, perhaps, the highest honours should be allotted to the combination of industry with genius; and some composition be given, by which the trial may be made. Here it is not so; and the man who takes his degree with the greatest credit, may very possibly have no general knowledge of the chain of history, little critical scholarship, no acquaintance whatever with true science; but in their stead, a minute and puerile accuracy in some few points and treatises, which, as soon as he leaves

the University, he will be sure to forget, or glad to throw aside; or when he thinks of making use of these wonderful attainments in the world, he will find himself in the situation of a man who wishes to teach his native tongue abroad, without being able to speak or to understand the language of the country to which he is going.

With regard to our course of Mathematics, I own I admire its principle, although some of our best mathematicians blame, perhaps justly, the method in which the Examination is conducted. The study of them is not requisite for a degree; but honour and celebrity attend success in their pursuit. This is as it should be: there must, of course, in all places of education be some *sine quâ non* or other; and the framers of our system have not, certainly, been most happy in their choice; yet the study of Mathematics should more than any other be left to our

option; as they are necessary for but few stations in life, and can only be followed with satisfaction when they are undertaken with partiality. I am free, also, to confess, that our alphabetical arrangement of the names of those who take honours, appears to me a more prudent plan than any other; to confer quite sufficient distinction, and excite quite sufficient emulation. If academical celebrity were the ultimate end of the studies or compositions which are there encouraged, other systems may undoubtedly attain the object more completely: but if we carry our views farther, we must perceive, that such unremitted attention as is then necessary to a single aim, is detrimental to general knowledge and advancement; and the most successful candidate may at last find that the petty portion of literary fame is a poor recompense for the failure of his sight, and the injury of his constitution.

We have hitherto considered what we have in the University; if we now proceed to what we have not, we shall, perhaps, find the strange contradiction of there being at the same time and place superfluity and deficiency. This deficiency is most apparent on the points of modern history, natural philosophy, and modern improvements in general. It is an insult to our common sense to tell us, that there are public lectures on all these subjects; since few have time or inclination to attend them; and none can either incur disgrace from the omission, or gain credit from the attainment. Yet it is needless to descant upon these topics, as their importance has been so often and so ably demonstrated: the present system has stood its ground, not from the weakness or timidity of its assailants, but the persevering obstinacy of those who defend it. I would merely suggest a question, which has frequently occurred to my own mind;

why may not these studies be put on the same footing with Mathematics; and a third class of honours instituted, which it is at the option of the Undergraduate to take or decline, in proportion as he is content with ignorance, or desirous of distinction?

If any member of the University wishes to acquire celebrity, by other means besides the Examinations in the Schools, he will, of course, write for the prizes which are annually given. The Essays are very probably of use to form a Latin or English style with purity and elegance: they may display great depth of thought and beauty of expression; but Essays, except on some very popular subject, will not be read with eagerness, and for this reason there is seldom any strong competition for the honour of victory. Of our compositions in verse I have heard it said, that they are the best methods ever yet devised to repress originality, and curb

genius. The Latin, it has been remarked, if it be worth any thing, must derive its value from what it borrows from the poets of the Augustan age, and the best poem is nothing more than the best plagiarism. Virgil, if he could now appear among us, might certainly be indignant at seeing his favourite flowers transplanted and misplaced; stunted for want of room, yet withering from the contagion of the weeds, which grow in monstrous luxuriance around them. But these sentiments are far from correct; since native genius may be shown to no inconsiderable degree even in a dead language: nor is all the censure, perhaps, merited which is poured upon the folly of confining fancy to fifty lines on a sculptural or architectural subject; and allotting the prize not to the most poetic diction or imagery, but the most accurate description of what Winkelman, and many others, must describe much more accurately, and in a style much better suited to the subject.

For it may be answered that the youthful Pegasus stands in more need of the rein than the spur; and that the faults against which there is most use in providing, are flighty luxuriance, and the want of pruning and condensing, for that in writing, more than all other things, we find the truth of the old proverb, that "the half is more than the whole." Yet, after all, we cannot observe the quantity of poetic beauty which may be put into the small space of fifty lines, without wishing that it could have appeared with greater splendour in a larger space; and sincerely regretting that the author of the Belvidere Apollo had not an opportunity of displaying his genius upon such a subject as Palestine.

he excuse is, that patience would be exhausted, d time would be wanting for any longer recitation in the Theatre. If this be really the se, I would hint, with all due respect for their learning and abilities, that the Public Orator and the Professor of Poetry might in some mea-

sure shorten their speeches; since this seems a preferable expedient to depriving the Bachelors of the greater part of their reward, by not permitting them to read their Essays at Commemoration, but merely mentioning the name of the successful candidate, which measure is now said to be in agitation. After all, perhaps, composition in youth is very little to be encouraged: men ought assuredly to read much before they pretend to write; and gain an intimate acquaintance with both animate and inanimate nature, instead of intruding their crudities upon the attention of the world. He who begins to write early, will not at any time of his life be likely to write well: his imagination will be exhausted before his judgment is matured. Here we are at least safe from the melancholy madness of making Odes; a species of composition which should be attempted latest, as it requires the largest share of both judgment and genius. They may, however, be made without either of

these qualities by as sure a method as any other piece of mechanism whatever: some few turns and exclamations, which descend from generation to generation, as common property, mixed up with liberal quotations from the classic authors, are sufficient, and more than sufficient, to form a very pretty lyrist. Yet it is rather a mistake to imagine that every thing which is not prose, must of necessity, and for that reason, be poetry.

Let it not be supposed, that by any thing which is here advanced, it is the wish of the writer to depreciate an acquaintance with classical literature, or to praise the moderns indiscriminately in opposition to the ancients. Far from it: I can perceive the peculiar excellence of the latter as much as the most enthusiastic of their champions; and a flowery eulogium upon their beauties would be neither original nor difficult. Their admirers do them the greatest in-

jury, in desiring that they should monopolize attention and destroy freedom of thought: a cause is better forwarded, by reforming what is wrong, than by extolling what every one must acknowledge to be right.—I am even far from thinking meanly of the labours of verbal criticism: any person who is at all conversant with the literature of the ancients must be aware, that this criticism, to be successfully performed, requires not merely industry, learning, and accuracy of research, but also no small portion of natural talent, memory, and taste; quickness of discernment and soundness of judgment. The critic must not only understand the sense of the author, whom he undertakes to illustrate; but be able to catch his beauties, and distinguish every peculiarity of his style. To put this matter in the clearest light, we need only compare the English editions of the present day, to those which were printed abroad after the revival of learning, and indeed at much later periods. In

the one case, we have neatness, conciseness, and utility; and in short, real knowledge imparted —as it always should be imparted—with clearness and elegance; but without parade or ostentation; in the other, ponderous volumes, filled with disputes on points not worth disputing; which are either plain at first sight to the common sense of the reader, or must after all be of necessity left undecided.—Yet if we merely seek for an exercise of thought, we shall hardly find any that will last us longer than the mighty labours of these indefatigable annotators. Their utility, indeed, has never been sufficiently esteemed; and they well deserve their place in the hall of the Ptolemies, or among the magnanimous heroes of Burney; for the object they have in view is among the most important of all human considerations: truth and reason are necessary for our subsistence: the old hemisphere would have remained as happy and as enlightened without the discovery of a new one, but not

without the improvements of science and criticism. What indeed are the discoverers of worlds, when compared to the discoverers of truth? What are the restorers of liberty to the restorers of sense? What are Harmodius, or Timoleon, Gustavus, or Tell, to Aldus, and Scaliger, Casaubon, and Bentley?—It can never be sufficiently lamented, that these sentiments have not universally, and in all ages, been entertained; since in that case Addison might have been the Schutz of England; Columbus might have been the first to descry a new reading; and Newton, instead of wasting his conjectures upon the heavenly bodies, might have given us a new edition of Euclid, or Archimedes. Even the contentions and failures of the annotators afford subjects for the most interesting reflections: and nothing can display more forcibly the uncertainty of human pride and greatness, than the sight of some learned critic, who, while he is singing his pæan over a vanquished predecessor,

is himself driven from the field by a younger rival; as the Corinthians were attacked and defeated at the very moment in which they were erecting a trophy.

But to return in sober earnestness to this University. The most unintelligible jargon of verbal criticism is at least as useful as the hypothetical syllogisms of our Divinity Schools, or the farcical exhibition of our Determining Bachelors. But these subjects I will not press: for the sake of the University, I will spare the detail of its absurdities: I will even suppose that there may be reasons to continue, what there is a necessity to condemn: though of this we may be assured, that trifling points, such as these, afford the greatest scope of ridicule to the superficial observer; and that by retaining them in the system, we betray as great a want of policy as of resolution. It may be said, that they are mere forms; but why are not forms to be abolished,

when they become notoriously absurd, and, in fact, a real inconvenience, as they require attendance from perhaps some distant part of the country? The worst is, that upon such topics it is impossible to be serious: they set gravity at defiance; and however they may excite concern of mind, they certainly mock composure of muscle. If, however, any person is anxious to defend them, I shall have at least this disadvantage on my side, that I may incur the greatest disgrace from a defeat, but cannot possibly obtain any honour by a victory.

There are many other points in our system, which must experience censure as often as they incur notice: but sufficient has been said for our present purpose. These are merely unconnected hints, to excite a spirit of inquiry in the members of the several colleges: they are written as plainly, as temperately, and as dispassionately, as I could make them; with no view

of applause to my own effusions, but with the hope of some slight service to the University, and to myself as connected with it: they are thrown together so hastily, that many inaccuracies of thought and expression may undoubtedly be found, although it would be very difficult to disprove the general scope and tenor of what has been advanced. There are many among us, who can sit down with contentment and self-complacency in ignorance and in error; who persuade themselves that in all human as well as divine institutions "whatever is, is right;" that what is good at one time, must be of course good at another; and that, as our fathers framed the system at first with consideration and wisdom, so no revolution of ages can destroy its perfection, or diminish its excellence, but must make it, on the contrary, at once admirable for its beauty, and venerable for its antiquity. Surely, however, it is wiser, to form our own judgment in our own century; if the

authority of great names be against us, to pause indeed before we decide our opinion, but not to be biassed, when it is decided: to consider, as has been often observed, "the antiquity as the infancy of the world;" and that every period must naturally and reasonably make some addition to the knowledge of the preceding, without, however, at all detracting from the comparative merit of the philosophers and legislators of the elder time; inasmuch as the latter have the power to set out from the very point at which the former had stopped. No man must pretend to reason, who has not accustomed himself to view all things in the abstract; without the smallest deference to antiquity or novelty; without prejudice and without partiality: and I hope I may at least claim more real interest in the state and discipline of the University, than such champions as I have mentioned. Nor is my presumption in these observations so great as might be imagined: many persons far wiser, and

with far more weight than myself, take the same view of the question; but from the responsibility of their stations, they are not at liberty to declare their sentiments. Those who might be strong enough to subvert the pillars of our discipline, are fearful that the ruins of the structure would fall upon themselves.—Is it, however, natural that we should acquiesce in a system, which, according to the universal opinion, is defective in some parts, and nugatory in others? Or is it wonderful that we should be discontented, when we see the University, of which we are members, become a standing joke to the world, and considered a synonymous term with error, ignorance, prejudice, and obstinacy? We are not yet of an age to bear all this with the philosophical indifference of our seniors; but, on the other hand, we are no longer children, and it is time that we should have, "what even slaves are free to," liberty of thought. Our men in authority may at length rise from their tor-

por; they may display all the suspicion which accompanies the consciousness of a bad cause; all the severity which is the offspring of fear; and all the resolution which is the consequence of despair: but they will not deter us from exercising our own understandings on points which concern our own welfare, and have a reference not only to ourselves, but to every generation which may succeed us in this place. Our selfish, and our disinterested feelings, shall be all equally awakened.

Nothing is here mentioned which is not universally known, and almost as universally regretted: we may be told, indeed, that to hunt after perfection is as useless a pursuit as that of the madman who amused himself by catching sunbeams on a wall; and that any measures we could propose, would only have a similar effect to such as in the attempt to cure supposed insanity, have driven the patient into absolute deli-

rium. Yet we have men fully capable of making improvement and reformation; and even from other institutions suggestions might be taken. The Romans would never have been masters of the world, if they had not had the policy to adopt the inventions of others, and if they had not made the Carthaginian galley a model for their own. And should the faults of other systems be numerous and pernicious, we may still remember, that a medicine may be extracted from the same plant which contains a poison. My humble office is accomplished; I have pointed out some notorious errors and imperfections: but I do no wrong to the University, unless the defenders of the present system are prepared to say, that "*summum jus est summa injuria.*"

The matter, after all, lies in a small compass, and may be comprised in a few questions. Is Logic a good method to teach accuracy, and

strength of reasoning; or are the treatises of Aristotle the best exercises to form the mind? Are these studies worth the time and attention which are now bestowed upon them; or, at least, might not other things, far more useful, be learnt in the same time, and with less trouble? Is not the system confined, and are not many branches of learning entirely neglected, which are absolutely requisite in a liberal education, and for the purposes of life? If the answer to these questions must be against the present discipline, some remedy should of course be adopted; if, however, any man shall really and honestly believe that every thing is best in its present state, I can respect the sincerity of his opinion, while I pity the weakness of his understanding. It is at any rate worth while that the matter should be taken into consideration: the education of youth is always a noble and important task, and here, perhaps, more noble and important than in any other part of the habitable globe. For if we

consider the weight and dignity of Oxford itself, and the respectability of the characters who compose the great bulk and body of its members; if we look to the munificence with which the colleges are endowed, or even the imposing and venerable grandeur of their appearance, we may fairly assert that this University is the first in Europe, and in the world. The sons of men, who have the highest rank, or the greatest power, influence, and interest in the country, come to reside here in that period of life when their faculties are at the height, their hopes and confidence in themselves unbounded; and before they have yet learnt the evils of ambition, or the nothingness of fame. They come in the full persuasion, that all the studies of the place will either improve their reason, or delight their imagination. Deeply, therefore, are they disappointed, when they find bigotry in the instruction, and prejudice in the discipline; that they must attend in all things, as in Logic, to

the form rather than the matter; and that much has been retained which should long since have been dismissed; and much refused, which should long since have been adopted. Yet this is the truth. The philosopher, who views human affairs in their true light, and has had leisure to remark the follies of the wisest, and the meanness of the proudest, will, perhaps, smile at error and ignorance in the seat of orthodoxy and learning: yet there is as much matter for an Heraclitus, as a Democritus, as much scope for serious sorrow, as for poignant ridicule. It requires, however, little foresight, and certainly no spirit of prophecy, to discern that this condition of things cannot last; "the tomb of the Capulets" is already yawning for our errors; and if any remarks, such as have now been offered, should be read five years hence, I have the fullest trust and conviction they will have become obsolete and unintelligible; and the points on which they turn, will be only remem-

bered among the antiquities of Oxford. If these errors are once brought openly and completely to light, they must instantly fade and vanish, like bodies which have been long preserved under the ground, but which immediately crumble and fall to pieces when exposed to the air. It is, indeed, whispered, that some alterations are about to be made, and some parts of the present system abolished. This is "devoutly to be wished," and these points will then, it is hoped, be taken into consideration; that our system is confined; that we have no modern science, or natural philosophy; that the true end of education is not kept sufficiently in view; that the Logic and Treatises of Aristotle should be entirely discarded; and that we should not pay reverence to authors only in proportion to their antiquity or their obscurity. A future age will hardly believe that such errors and such prejudices could ever have had existence. At yet, however, they may capitulate on terms, and

march out with the honours of war; but if they are obstinately determined to defend their works, and bid defiance to every assault of reason and improvement, the time may soon come when they will be compelled to surrender at discretion; and, as they had no moderation in their prosperity, they will meet with no pity in their misfortunes.

THE

OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

THE

OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

P. "SAY, what is easiest?" Thales, ere he twice
Had heard the question, said, "To give advice."
Thales was right; yet equal reasons make
This same advice the hardest thing to take.
You wish me silent, and exhort to stay
Where zeal for wisdom holds a sacred sway;
But who was ever silent, doom'd to feel
How dull that wisdom, and how cold that zeal?
Who discontented, yet not prone to vent
The frothy torrent of his discontent?
Fool that I am! who know not how to paint
The wit of Dons, the pleasures of restraint;
But sick of scenes, unlike what fancy drew,
Must bid, my friend, to them, and thee, adieu!

C. Ah, luckless youth! what! thirsting still to range;
And only constant in the love of change!
Still at each tide of varying life unblest;
Unfit for action, yet fatigued with rest!
Haste—seek perfection, till thy race is run,
Then sigh to find at last—thyself undone:
When thou shalt see, or tried experience shew,
A place without its follies—freely go—
Some unknown land beyond the watery waste,
Where man is always wise, and woman chaste—
Yet might cool reason, in her sober strain,
Still give one counsel more—till then, remain!
Here, safe reclin'd in academic shade,
See, what the world its votaries hath made!
The ruin'd statesman, tir'd of broils and leagues;
The people's murmurs, and the court's intrigues—
The churchman, forc'd to feel, in sad surprise,
That solid merit hath no wings to rise—
The staff-propp'd veteran, scam'd with many a scar,
The sole memorials from years of war—
The bold adventurer, tost on life's rude sea,
Who found no voyage sure, no haven free—

The man, no pleasures lure, no fears appal,
Who climbs fame's fatal precipice—to fall—
The more than child, who flutters youth away,
To court the fair, and glitter with the gay:
Late taught, that folly is man's only care;
And woman never thinks—but to ensnare—
Here might they all, in scenes unknown to strife,
Seek a calm sunset to the storms of life.
Here, ere ambition's troubled dream was o'er,
And mitres, war, and pleasure, pleas'd no more,
Wolsey, ere sunk "in ruin as in guilt,"
Had better sought the walls, himself had built:
Here smil'd to think, in life's last parting hour,
How poor is wealth, how impotent is pow'r!

Yes: if there be one sacred scene of ease,
Where reason yet may dawn, and virtue please;
Where ancient Science bursts again to view,
With mightier truths, which Athens never knew:
One spot to order, peace, religion, dear;
Rise, honest pride, nor blush to claim it here!
Why then these fond complaints? *P.* Because, my friend,
Substantial ills these fancied goods attend.

I too,—when first these glistening eyes survey'd
Majestic Oxford's hundred towers display'd;
And silver Isis rolling at her feet
Adorn the Sage's, and the Poet's seat:
Saw Radcliffe's dome in classic beauty rear'd,
And learning's stores in Bodley's pile rever'd;
First view'd with humble awe, the steps that stray'd
Slow in the gloom of academic shade;
Or fram'd in thought, with fancy's magic wand,
Wise Bacon's arch; thy bow'r, fair Rosamond!
Heav'n! how I hop'd, in studious calm to find
Peace for the soul, and wisdom for the mind!
How swift, how bright, the kindling visions came!
How burnt the thirst of science, and of fame!
What bade these feelings ebb, ye pedants, say?
What broke the dream, and rent the veil away?
What dash'd these hopes to nothing?—'Twas to see
Such folly cloth'd in such solemnity;
To see, amid the foldings of the gown,
Lurk the same failings which disgrace the town;
Spleen, envy, meanness, pride but ill repress,
And all the meaner passions of the breast,

Mix'd with the calm, which leaves no trace behind,
The sullen, sad, monotony of mind.
Oh! though remote from Isis toil and strife,
And all the deeper interests of life;
Ye souls to feeling, and to nature true,
Who love retirement, 'tis no place for you!
No place for thee, whom young romance has taught
To nurse ideal luxury of thought;
Who feel'st a joy, to vulgar minds unknown,
To gaze upon the sea, and muse alone;
View the grey ruin, while the moon half shrouds
Her modest beauty in the veil of clouds;
Or pensive hear the baying watch-dog's howl,
And solemn screeching of the boding owl:
Or snatch those pleasures from the midnight breeze,
Which least explain'd, are mightiest still to please!
Oh! what the lovely stream, the silent shade,
The awful tow'rs, which seem for science made;
The solemn Chapels, which to prayer invite,
Whose storied windows shed a holy light;
If there Philosophy base chains has felt,
Nor simple pure Religion ever dwelt;

No Physics there, by just gradations, lead
Through Nature's stream to Nature's fountain-head;
But e'en Divinity becomes a trade,
And they, who look the gravest, never pray'd;
Or pray in such a high imperious tone,
It seems they merely would demand their own;
If sad St. Mary hears polemics preach,
And Bampton Lectures points of doctrine teach;
If heav'n is mock'd—and bells to Chapel toll,
To see no name be missing on the roll?—

C. Yet here Religion's firmest aids preside,
To stem the torrent of corruption's tide.
Here, if on earth, the studious mind pursues,
Safe, undisturb'd her scientific views:
While thousand volumes court her keen research,
Lights of the Law, and Fathers of the Church;
No worldly cares their deep distraction blend
To force attention from its single end:
No roseate charms intrude their fatal sway;
No smiling wantons flatter and betray.
Here Church and State—*P.* Oh touch not on those rocks!
I grant you learned, grave, and orthodox:

I swear, that always truth in schoolmen shines,
And always pure religion in divines;
I swear there's sense in Logic—only stop
Those dreadful words, and let the subject drop!
When once they come, the kindling gownsmen stalk,
"And they will talk—ye Gods! how they will talk!"
For hear some loud Professor at the feast,
Or awful Orthodoxy's great high priest;
Some man of fit rotundity, to claim
So high an office, and so great a name;
Some British Omar, with the Caliph's creed,
"All, but the Stagyrite, the flames should feed:
"Those things are needless, which in him are found,
"Those, which are not, are hurtful and unsound:"
Still, with consistency of blame and praise,
Which might a mob or minister amaze;
Ere other themes are circling, o'er the bottle
Cry, "Church and State, the Prince and Aristotle."

Thus, I remember, ere these scenes I saw,
But hope had drawn them, such as hope will draw:
A shrewd old man, on Isis' margin bred,
Smil'd at my warmth, and shook his wig, and said:

" Youth will be sanguine, but before you go,
" Learn these plain rules, and treasure, when you know.
" Wisdom is innate in the gown and band;
" Their wearers are the wisest of the land:
" Science, except in Oxford, is a dream:
" In all things Heads of Houses are supreme:
" Proctors are perfect, whosoe'er they be:
" Logic is Reason in Epitome;
" Examiners, like kings, can do no wrong:
" All modern learning is not worth a song:
" Passive obedience is the rule of right:
" To argue, or oppose, is treason quite:
" Mere common-sense would make the system fall:
" Things are worth nothing; words are all in all."

C. Schoolmen have said, for schoolmen may be wise—
That " Fallacy in universals lies."
A man may rail in generals for a week:—
Ask for particulars, he cannot speak.
'Tis thus at inns in hungry haste you ring:
" Waiter, what is there?" " Sir, there's every thing."
" Every thing's nothing: bring the bill of fare,
" This all! by Heav'n 'twould make a parson swear!"

Unhappy man! alas, too soon thou learnest,
That ev'ry thing is nothing in good earnest!—
Come, shew our follies, one by one, to light,
Shew, if you can.—*P.* My friend, a Freshman might.
Here endless joys his raptur'd thoughts foresee,
Panting for praise, and charm'd with novelty:
With boundless hope he inly vows to claim
The brightest meeds of literary fame;
The yearly prizes courts with soaring muse,
And his own form in Sheldon's rostrum views;
Reckless of Pleasure's voice, or Beauty's eye,
He bids all passions, but ambition, die:
No labours tire, no difficulties vex;
Scarce can the Stagyrite himself perplex;
Yet sick, at last, of tracing o'er and o'er
Some old historian, oft perus'd before,
His flighty fancy seeks a wider range,
Too fond of taste, and elegance, and change:
He doubts, by toil and disappointment crost,
And, like a woman, while he doubts, is lost!
Then rage the passions, from restraint more strong;
And sweep, like streams which burst their banks, along:

Or care and chill indifference round him creep;
Or sloth and bad example lull to sleep;
Yet praise he wooes—but chang'd the fair pretence
To midnight broil, and prodigal expense;
Or buoy'd by hope, which still the wisest fools,
He seeks the highest honours in the Schools:
Where at some trifling point's obscure details,
Memory and thought forsake him—and he fails.
Thwarted and sad he bears his sorrows home,
And feels the rankling wound for life to come.
He, on the world who plays the venturous game
For all, ambition, valour, love may claim;
Though foil'd, or stopp'd; cast backward, or astray,
Renews the contest, till he gains the day;
While struggles o'er, and disappointments past,
Enhance the triumph of success at last:
But here should some unfeeling pedant's frown
Nip the bright budding of his glory down;
Not once again the drooping youth may try
His desp'rate fate, nor throw again the die.*

* It has been observed that "the great art in life is to play "high, and stake little:" here a young man of acute sensibility stakes his comfort, and plays for a name.

Or should the Paper shew his blazon'd name
In the first lists of academic fame;
Still, still the care remains to form his mind—
No college honours fit him for mankind.

Yet this, I deem, or is, or ought to be,
The aim of either University:
All education to this point must tend;
Or what its use, its object, and its end?
Strange! that while all around new lights discern,
The seat of learning never deigns to learn!

C. Yet here the rays of modern science spread;
Professors are appointed, lectures read.*

* When a stranger enters Oxford, and sees printed in large letters, that the Clinical Professor, the Savilian Professor, and sundry other Professors, propose to give a course of Lectures on such and such subjects, he will, perhaps wonder for a moment at the accusation, that no attention is paid to the modern sciences; but his surprize will vanish, when, on reading a little farther, he finds the condition, which the Lecturer makes for the repose of his lungs; "if he can get a class," or, "if there is "a sufficient number of names to form a class." An unlucky proviso of this kind, is a simple proof, that the younger mem-

If none attend, or hear; not our's the blame,
Their's is the folly—and be their's the shame.

P. How deep the Sophistries Logicians draw!
Poor common-sense can hardly find a flaw.
Proceed, most learned friend, and gravely say,
That if men will be Solomons—they may.
Yet, if the dreams of ancients still must be
The "sum and substance" of the first degree;
While modern science meets a doubtful doom;
Like some plain girl in an assembly-room,
Who waits, in painful diffidence, to know
If fops will deign to ask her hand, or no.
Think, which the most attention will receive;
What fools must learn; or what the wise may leave.
At lore and logic, who shall dare to scoff,
Which make that wond'rous animal, a Soph?
Or who will choose that knowledge for his aim,
Which gains no credit, and confers no fame?

lers of the University will not much trouble themselves about any branches of knowledge, which bring neither credit in the prosecution, nor censure in the omission.

Young men, alas! in this degenerate nation,
Perform no works of supererogation.
For see, what nearer, weightier cares engage
The youth of England in our happy age!
See, to their view what varied pleasure springs;
Cards, tennis, billiards, and ten thousand things.
'Tis their's the coat with neater grace to wear,
Or tie the neckcloth with the Regent's air;
The rapid race of wild expense to run;
To drive the tandem, or the chaise and one;
To float along the Isis—or to fly
In haste to Abingdon—who knows not why?
To gaze in shops, and saunter hours away
In raising bills, they never think to pay;
Then deep carouse, and raise their glee the more,
While angry duns assault th' unheeding door;
And feed the best old man, that ever trod,
The merry poacher who defies his God.

Yet some pale youth fatigues th' unwilling brain
With Euclid's theorems, or Pindar's strain:
Careless of sleep, and midnight's noxious damp,
Cons his hard studies by the waning lamp;

Endures, in patient toil, without a sigh,
The aching forehead, and the closing eye:
And fondly trusts some college gift to gain
By strength of talent, or by dint of pain.
Then hope, perhaps, or fiend of busy spite,
Or gnome, or devil, spurs him on to write.*
Scarce know themselves upon his paper spread,
The borrow'd beauties of the mighty dead:
But out of character, and time, and place,
Lose all their force, propriety, and grace:
Sad, as when sever'd from the parent wood
The branch of myrtle wept with tears of blood!
Or attic marbles mourn their fatal doom,
Torn from their base, and crowded in a room!

* In Oxford or in Cambridge, it is certainly a different thing to write a prize poem, or to write a good poem; though there may be no necessity that the prize poems should not be good. The chief requisites in good poetry are genius, judgment, and an observance of nature: in the Universities flights of imagination are altogether discouraged: a composition is judged not by the greatest beauties, but the fewest faults: and the most needful qualities for writing, are education at a public school; a mechanical tact in imitating the ancient authors; and a servile compliance with the reigning taste of the place.

Or happier in his native tongue, he sues,
With self-beguiling joy, the British Muse,
Cursing Sir Roger, whose harsh will confines *
The gownsman's flowing vein to fifty lines.
This year he thinks the Theatre shall see
Its glories beaming to their full degree;
As when gay Emperors chas'd the college gloom,
And turn'd the Radcliffe to a dining-room;
When ravish'd Oxford made, with vast applause,
Kings, warriors, statesmen, Doctors of her Laws.
This year shall mightier music fill the dome;
From all around shall youth and beauty come;
Italian lips shall tune the melting strain,
Till pleasure's ecstasy is almost pain;
Thy belles, sweet Isis, 'mid the rest be there;
In dress, as splendid, and in form, as fair.

* I have been lately told, that Sir Roger Newdigate merely left by his will twenty guineas for a composition in English verse, without any conditions or limitations; but that these were made by the worthy Heads of Houses, who wished to abridge the recitations in the Theatre. This, however, is, I trust, a mistake: at any rate, the feeling now in the University is decidedly against the present plan: and I believe, there are not subjects for above ten or twelve more poems.

She, too, perhaps,—the maid, whose loveliness
Now fires his mind—shall smile on his success;
Her speaking eye upon his form shall gaze—
Her fair white hand shall give a louder praise—
Her heart shall beat to hear his rising name—
And bid her love accompany his fame.

Yet, be thy love and genius what they will,
Unhappy poet! check that rapid quill:
Yet, for thy credit, hear a friend advise:
Consult not, trust not fancy, but thine eyes;
Let all thy lines be like an artist's lecture,
And seek not poetry, but architecture:
Go where they shew the model, if you fee 'em,
And take the profile of the Coliseum!*

C. Peace! peace! this levelling satire, thus applied,
Hurts us no more, than all the world beside.
Why rail on Oxford—nor direct your spleen
To Leyden, Leipsic, Cam, or Aberdeen?†

* The last subject for Sir Roger Newdigate's prize.

† Let it be always kept in mind, that there is no comparison made or meant to be made, between this and any other system

P. Because, my friend, however great may be
Their faults and follies—what are they to me?
Let others dread the storm, or bless the gale,
We care but for the ship in which we sail;
Britons will damn the climate and the rain,
But curse no serpents, when they feel no pain:
Our follies touch me—let us these pursue—
In sooth, my friend, we have enough to do.

For lo! the first in dignity and might,
Thy glories, Convocation, burst to sight.
Hail, synod grave, which Heads of Houses keep,
To talk, and legislate—" perchance to sleep!"
Hail, Heads of Houses, whom your stars have made
To seem philosophers in masquerade!
I hail you all, ye Dons of high degree,
Puff'd with the conscious pride of dignity;

of education. Oxford, with all its faults, seems to me preferable to the mathematical mania of Cambridge, or the irregularity, insubordination, and superficial acquirements of foreign Universities: and its studies will probably infuse more taste and judgment than the one; and more solidity of character and conduct, than the other.

Solemn, and sage, and portly to a man,
The worthy semblance of the Turk's Divan!

By Heaven! their looks compose an awful scene:
What pomp of words! what majesty of mien!
Oh! if all these the shallow brain belies,
Folly can look, at least, most wondrous wise.
To their own Oxford first their thoughts they bear,
And guard her errors with paternal care:
But, now and then, they hold the high debate,
On England's policy, and Church and State;
Deplore the licence of the stage and press;
Lament a grievance: carry an Address.
Thither, as bards might sing of Grecian fire,
Their Gods descend, and all their breasts inspire;
Such Gods, as best such mighty men beseem,
The guardians, Isis, of thy sacred stream.
There Orthodoxy, like a Glory shines
Full on the forehead of her sound divines;
Frets their great souls with fears of coming evil,
And sends Wesleyan Chapels to the Devil.
There oft are seen two darker forms to stride
Through all the crowd, call'd Prejudice and Pride.

But Pedantry you more might hear than see;
Such a loud jabb'ring Deity is he.
There hoary Precedent, with wrinkles sage,
Tries every counsel by the rule of age.
This, Isis, this was he, who stopp'd thy woe,
When a sad nation bade its tears o'erflow;
When SHE, the Star, who shone the brightest here,
Left earth,—to flourish in a fitter sphere! *
But England, like a mother, droop'd the head;
So lov'd her, living; so bewails her, dead!

What wonder, then, with gods and men like these,
That perfect wisdom dictates their decrees?
Some they send forth like rays from heaven, to sight;
And some mysterious silence veils in night.

* On the most afflicting calamity, which has ever occurred to any country, Oxford was almost the only place in the kingdom, which made no public demonstrations of regret or condolence—not because "that learned body wanted loyalty"—not because its individual members did not sympathize with the nation and the Royal Family—but because there was no precedent. We have already begun to feel and think by precedent—we may soon perhaps learn to eat, drink, sleep, and dress by the same rule—and then how absurd it will be to complain of modern degeneracy!

Whence fools suggest, who thither ne'er have gone,
That little has been said, and nothing done;
That all was chit-chat in a solemn strain;
And sitting down, and rising up again;
Far, far from us such thoughts, who must adore
Their dictates much, their awful silence more.

What wonder, too, if thou should'st claim a seat
In this bright conclave of the wise and great;
Too gay for pomp, too lively for a Don,
At thee they laugh, unhappy Bickerton! *
Yet thou, methinks, could'st laugh in turn, to see
How ill their mien and character agree;
Strip but the stately step, and sapient brow,
They stand as helpless, and as mad, as thou!

* Mr. Bickerton is an original character, which in most places, is of itself sufficient to cast upon a man the imputation of insanity—I once in the summer heard him inveigh with great indignation against the epithet here joined with his name. "How," he said, "can any one be unhappy, who breathes the air of "heaven on a morning like this?" There is more philosophy in this single exclamation, than in all the gloomy denunciations of modern poetry.

C. Forbear, forbear, this dull satyric vein,
Still, still it proves the poetaster's bane:
To rail, if systems some loose faults admit,
Shows spleen indeed, but poverty of wit;
And Logic censures him, and Reason too—
Who lays on all the follies of a few:
Of rules or men some wiser than the rest
Must ever be—a friend would choose the best.
But as we smile to see the playful child
Whirl his young limbs in native spirits wild,
Then giddy stand, and feel the heaving ground,
And wonder why so swift the trees turn round:
'Tis thus with you who blindly dare to call
All others mad—more mad yourself than all.

END OF THE FIRST DIALOGUE.

THE

OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE SECOND.

THE

OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE SECOND.

P. NIGHT came, and with it came those hours of rest,
Which owls, ghosts, thieves, and lovers love the best:
Loud mirth and revelry were echoing round—
Why are they hush'd? what fear has check'd the sound?
A potent spirit is abroad; a form
Of sudden terror quells the College storm!
Why shrink ye back, ye gownsmen? why retreats
The shameless wanton to remoter streets?
Why stands the crowd, with stiff and silent air,
The bow all humble and the head all bare?
What God, or Hero passes; what high man
Receives the homage of his vassal-clan?
See! see! they come! the despot Proctors come!—
Sure never Consul kept such state at Rome!

Swift sturdy Satellites compose their train,
Whose forms declare, " Resistance, flight, are vain."

C. And who shall blame the system of police,
Which curbs the gownsman and preserves the peace?
And who shall grieve, that just restraint should bind,
In youth, the wanton turbulence of mind?

P. Yet when the sober tradesman would retire
Calm with his children round the winter fire:
" The world shut out;" his daily labour done;
And home's domestic dear delights begun:
If then, without, sound academic strains;
If shatter'd fall a Dignitary's panes;
Must he be question'd, and his door unbarr'd,
Like some suspected traitor?—this is hard.—
Must his young wife from midnight slumber rise?
Nor room be sacred, where a mother lies?
Oh say, where English learning lifts her head,
Thence, English freedom, wherefore art thou fled?
Say, why did Chatham boast the Briton's right;
His house his castle—though in pow'rs despite:

Though scarce his cot should rise above the ground,
No beam unbroken, and no window sound;
Though ev'ry wind of heaven should enter there,
The King dares not—and shall the Proctor dare? *

Yes!—and for him yon castle near the steep—
Seek ye the moat, the drawbridge, and the keep!
Deem ye to hear its battlements along
The warder's measur'd tread, the trooper's broken song?
Alas! no herald there the lists proclaims
To courtly knights, and honourable dames:
No trophied banners grace the massy wall;
Nor harpers cheer, nor beauty decks the hall.
Ah me, a castle doom'd to uses vile!
To awe the poachers round for many a mile!

* Although these lines may refer to a particular occurrence, they are not intended as a reflection upon any particular person. The office of Proctor must be always sufficiently unthankful; and the applause or disapprobation in the Theatre is certainly no true criterion of merit; yet it is probable, that the Proctors themselves would be gladly without a power which is offensive to the inhabitants of the town, and contrary to the spirit of the constitution. Indeed, the possible good which may result from the practice, seems no equivalent for the positive danger and tyranny of the principle.

Where, solac'd with his pipe, the ruffian lies,
Waiting, with desperate calm—the next Assize;
Some miscreant creeps from bed of straw to ask
In vain a respite from his daily task;
Some wretch—who once was woman—whom the times
Have forc'd to seek her pittance from her crimes;
Who soon releas'd shall with loud laugh proclaim
Her fix'd insensibility to shame;
Though one dark choice her ev'ry thought must haunt—
To live by infamy—or die of want!

C. What then! shall each as strikes his fancy, be
Gambler, or drunkard, rake, or debauchee?
Shall mind and form before their prime decay,
And lewd intemperance sap the strength away?
Is such your system? *P.* Nay; in warmer flood
While flows the torrent of impetuous blood
'Tis just, controul, with equal laws applied,
Should fix its course, and cool its maddening tide.
Yet all must laugh, if men impose restraint,
Who act the sinner and assume the saint;
Grave moralists o'er youthful follies sigh,—
Whose ev'ry action gives their words the lie:

Increasing vice in modern days bewail;
Whose sallow features tell another tale:
If Tutors punish what they seldom shun,
Severe to all who do—as they have done—
Their wild career at once pursue condemn;
Give fees to Tuckwell,* and advice to them.

But here are none, who sleek in plenty, thrive,
Yet scorn the very truths by which they live,
Men of the Church—since to her gifts and stalls
Some easy Bishop, not Religion, calls—
Who sneer in secret, and for private ends,
But seek her banners to corrupt her friends;
Who wrest the simple style of sacred writ,
To point the ribaldry, which would be wit;
While, foes to Gibbon and Voltaire profest,
God and the Bible serve them for a jest;
And some low pun, some word's unmeaning play,
Drives e'en their mean hypocrisy away;

* A gentleman, whom the Cambridge punsters would call "Mercurialium custos virorum."

No; there are none; well-pleas'd, let candour own
Such baseness here to letter'd breasts unknown.

C. Hither, my friend, why should such men resort,
Who live so well in cities, and at court?

P. True; most are souls, whose dark and icy chill
No sorrows cause to pine, no joys to thrill;
Save where some barrier to their fortune dies;
Save where they lose th' expected benefice.
To such be peace—the constant calm repose,
The deep stagnation of th' eternal doze!
Till, sunk in sloth, their force of mind has ceas'd,
As lakes are muddiest where the stream is least.

Yet there may be, who once was fit to bear
A grander part on life's wide theatre;
Born to give laws, or destin'd to command,
The boast and bulwark of his native land;
Or form'd amidst admiring groups to sit,
"The source of pleasure, and the soul of wit."
One who had beam'd of courts or camps the star;
Reform'd the Senate, or adorn'd the Bar;

Or look'd through nature with excursive eye,
No science too profound; no views too high;
If such be lost to action and to fame,
Thou, Britain, mourn—thou, Oxford, blush for shame!
Alas! that fate and evil stars conspire,
In luckless hour, to quench that noble fire!
His College offers to increase his rents;
"His poverty, but not his will consents."
Confirm'd in gown and band, a Master now,
More solemn seems his step, more cold his brow;
But where the grander thought, the mightier aim?
His mind how chang'd! and scarce his form the same!
Thwarted, sunk, vanish'd, all his hopes decay;
And melt, like snow beneath the sun, away;
Prone by degrees his mental ardor lies,
As limbs grow stiff from want of exercise;
A stunted plant in uncongenial earth,
Droops the sad soul in vigour and in worth;
At length contracted to the narrow round,
Which heaven ne'er destin'd, but his wants have found;
The highest good ambition dares conceive,
The Bampton Lecture, or the velvet sleeve!

Lost as the lamp, which glimmers in the tomb,
He shines the meteor of the Common-room.
His joys are dead, ere life is well begun;
His wit, sense, genius, dwindle to a pun.
Now conscious feeling of superior pow'rs
But swells his heart with pride—with spleen devours.
For oft the madd'ning thought must intervene
Of what he is, and what he might have been.
Then, then he sighs—or with a sickly smile
Starts from the trance of apathy awhile:
Yet sinks as soon—since thought is worse than vain—
To helpless, hopeless lethargy again.
Oh! chance or fortune, providence or fate,
Be mine the dreariest lot, the shortest date:
Welcome or grief, or danger's dark abyss;
Yet save me only from a doom like this!

C. Nay: leave to ladies causeless sighs and tears,
And tremblings at imaginary fears!
Ladies there are—and they who know not such,
Had better know too little than too much—
Ladies there are, who feel or feign the dread
Of treach'rous snares for simple maidens spread;

And keep their charms behind the veil or fan,
To guard them from that base seducer, man;
Who yet might safe 'mid thousand Tarquins move,
Burlesques on beauty, antidotes to love.
'Tis thus, I hold, you dread the college post;
Denied, despise it; but obtain'd would boast.
And why with sacrilege of scorn neglect
That grave demeanour, which should teach respect?—

P. Such is my nature—nature rules us still,
Too deeply rooted to be chang'd at will;
What, though weak art would mar her settled plan,
And with exotic trappings deck the man;
In some rash moment fades the labour'd form,
Like paint dissolving when the cheek is warm.
Such is my nature: therefore must I smile,
If solemn jugglers thoughtless youth beguile;
Must think, no cap can mend the head below it,
No gown create philosopher or poet:
Must doubt, if reason always held her torch
To guide the Academus or the Porch:—

Though Athens beams, rever'd from length of age,
If all her sages were so very sage!
Not ev'ry devotee, who lifts to heav'n
Her pious eyes, may find her faults forgiv'n:
Not ev'ry Don, who folds with sapient air
His arms upon his breast, clasps wisdom there.

C. Young man, beware! 'tis grievous want of sense
To give men in authority offence.
And what your motives? *P.* Motives!—love of truth,
And pain, when error warps the mind of youth:
Motives, than fear of angry Dons more strong,
And lending vigour to the weakest song!
When Danish Canute loiter'd on the shore,
No wave durst touch a king, his courtiers swore.
Why ebb ye not, ye tides?—a monarch stands
To claim obedience, and ye seek the sands!
Yes! they roll'd on, by mightier nature bound,
And bade the monarch vanish—or be drown'd.

C. Yet surely praise is better taste, than blame.
P. Well; come then praise: and come to all the same!

Come, Panegyric, tickling letter'd ears,
*As Burney, Monk, and Blomfield praise their peers;
Praise thick, and wholesale, pointing still their pen
With "mighty heroes," or "most learned men!"
Come, view the Senior Common-room, and cry
"What charming talk! how wit and wisdom vie!"
Yet there are some, of pride and dinner full,
Grave, and sedate, and licens'd to be dull;
Their mouths so busy, and so good their fare,
How should inquiry's spirit enter there?
All local themes—till haply one succeed
Of sprightlier tone—I guess not what indeed—
Yet one there is, which ev'ry temper hits,
Can suit all ages, and inspire all wits.

This were not much;—but oft we see with pain
Infectious dulness spoil the younger vein;
And bind the gownsman to a single set
With the close chains of form and etiquette:

* Burney's preface to his "Tentamen" is a noble specimen of modern Latinity. How spirited and sublime is the exclamation, "en! magnanimi heroes!"

While poor Discourse, a prisoner on parole,
Forbidden seems o'er Maudlin-bridge to stroll;
But hovers, like a crippled bird, about
The college walls, and settles on a Scout:
Though e'en dull politics were some relief,
The last new novel, or the last new thief.

C. For heav'n's sake, stop! nor let thy ceaseless tongue
Run on in rhyming prose through right and wrong.

P. Alas! the crowding faults fatigue my eyes,
And follies still, like Alps on Alps, arise:
E'en could I have,—as Pope and Homer sing,
And witling poets,—on each lighter string,—
A throat of brass, with thousand tongues supplied,
And lungs of steel—and God knows what beside—
Still some, I fear, would want their just renown;
Unsung their glories, and their names unknown!

For who may tell, how Dons would vainly dress,
In pomp of mien, internal nothingness,
And, like the ostrich, some few reeds between,
Because they see not, think themselves unseen:

How Bachelors, of time's slow march afraid,
Must drawl the nonsense which they never made;
While the grave, patient Master keeps his chair,
And counts the seconds with a judge's air:
How still—blush, Oxford, blush to hear it told—
Survives the Monkish mummery of old:
How libraries in learned rows are spread,
With books admir'd and quoted—never read:
How glittering volumes shine in gaudy pride—
For strangers to admire their gilt outside:
How some gay Tutor, while he pockets pounds,
More rarely sees his pupils, than the hounds;
For let them fail or prosper, sink or swim,
Most mighty Nimrod! what are they to him?

* The Determining Bachelor must read either a copy of verses, which contains a certain number of lines, or an essay which must last a certain number of minutes. The quality is of course much less regarded than the quantity of the composition. If too short, it is drawled in the reading, and yet something is often obliged to be added to the conclusion; if too long, it is cut off by the master in the middle of a sentence. A man on the bed of Procrustes could hardly suffer a greater variety of torture.

Or how some leech of greatness bows him down
To the gold tassel, or the silken gown:
How—*C.* Have a care! let Scotch Reviewers write
These idle calumnies, as false as trite;
Distort the truth; with stupid rancour ply
The oft-told tale, the long-exploded lie.
Adopt not thou the hireling scribbler's trade:—
The worst of villains is a renegade.

P. You wrong me much—tho' deem'd without a cause
A dark apostate from thy faith, and laws;
I love thee, Oxford—and with guileless heart
Would probe thy wounds to save thy sounder part.
If this be treason—but I must not blame
Thy mighty champions of thy rules and fame;
Though friends sometimes, far more than foes, have
check'd
Improvement's progress, or expos'd defect.

C. What! closely view with microscopic eye
Faults scarcely worth the trouble to deny:
Yet boast your love! How well may ladies say,
Man shews affection in the strangest way!

P. Yet they who fawn, would bite; who flatter, hate.

C. Well—by this plan your love is surely great;
Yet while you slight our long establish'd rules,
And think that science only makes men fools;
Or till you stay content in quiet here,
Who but must question, if it be sincere?
When warring nations on the tented heath,
Burnish'd their arms, and plann'd the work of death,
And pensive Young, with studious air came nigh,
What wonder that they seiz'd him for a spy?*
Each living picture through the world pourtray'd,
Blends with its lighter hues its darker shade.
Severer toils attach to active strife,
And sloth attends on sedentary life.
Yet know, though Byron loves the darker side
'Tis not so much philosophy as pride.
E'en if the drearier view be nearest truth,
Gloom and suspicion suit not well with youth.

* This anecdote may be found in any life of the author of the Night Thoughts.

Then stop, or turn your satire's muddy stream,
Nor make poor Oxford an eternal theme.
What! shall the guardian of the rising race
Be like the painting in the market-place,
Where ev'ry country critic us'd to halt,
And smear his greasy finger o'er a fault?
Yet, 'mid such libels, still she stands unhurt,
Too strong to dread a cannonade of dirt;
Still, as her years increase, her honour grows,
And all assaults recoil upon her foes.
But *apropos*, there is a story told.—

P. One of your own? *C.* Oh no, indeed, quite old.
I swear not, mind, if it be false, or true;
But, as it suits our purpose, it will do.

A statue once, Apollo, Jove, or Pan,
Look'd, in the moonlight, like an honest man:
A drunken Lord came mutt'ring half a song,
And, full of wine and valour, reel'd along
Just where he should not. "Damn it! can't you stir?
Why did you let me run against you, Sir?

And first, 'tis said, he challeng'd it outright
To meet with pistols at the dawn of light.
It mov'd not, spoke not: so his Lordship thought
He'd best chastise the scoundrel on the spot.
Then straight attacks the statue where it stood,
Breaks his own fists, and covers it with blood:
Till, tir'd of victory, slow he stumbles on,
Exulting in the thoughts of glory won:
"Well, as I hope, I've taught him manners now;
And, by my soul! he ne'er return'd a blow!"

How weak your censure, while these scenes engage
The ripest studies of the rising age!
The first in wealth, or talent, birth, or mind,
To raise our Church, or guard our Law design'd,
Here must they come: here sacred Science gives
A stamp and sanction to their future lives!

P. There, there it is: in bodies of less weight
Who cares, their follies and their faults how great?
Here creep no errors but the land must feel;
But must endanger Britain's common weal.

Nor here, alas! the mighty mischief ends,
But taints our schools, and from our schools ascends.
Thus patriot zeal inspires my humble strain,
And bids me wish perfection—though in vain.

C. What? wish perfection! wish it on the earth!
Go then endow a college,—give it birth!
Is that impossible? then check thy spleen,
And praise the best of systems which have been:
Think what great names have risen from Oxford's stock,
Bacon, Boyle, Johnson, Addison, and Locke:
At humble distance trace their bright career,
Nor scorn the rules which made them what they were!

P. Yes: sages hence have risen: and Granta too
Boasts sages, poets, wits, as well as you.
But such I count not: such were never form'd
By college rules, with college studies warm'd:*

*There are many arguments which pass current "by courtesy of England," and are used on both sides with an equal appearance of gravity and respect; but to which neither party can inwardly attach the least importance. Of this kind is the

Such men must rise, though deep in deserts set,
And burst a Timour, or a Mahomet:
Bound by no laws, no steady course they keep;
But through the world, like rapid comets sweep.
Isis! howe'er their deeds or counsels shine,
Not thine their labours, nor their honours thine!
What's Leipsic's plain, Montmartre's height, to thee,
Though vet'ran Blucher walks an LL.D.?
No: view the gen'ral swarm, which life must draw,
From Oxford to the Senate, Church, or Law:

argument for the excellence of either of our Universities on account of some few men of extraordinary genius who have been educated in them. Thus, for example, a member of Oxford or Cambridge will descant with the utmost seriousness upon the merits of Locke and Milton. It is certain, indeed, that great names cast a species of lustre upon the place of their ed..cation, as upon the place of their nativity: but nobody will pretend to say, that Milton would not have been as good a poet, if he had happened to be a resident at Oxford, or Locke as great a philosopher if he had been by chance matriculated at Cambridge. The fact is, that we must rather form our judgment from men of the common stamp in character and abilities: we might otherwise draw a very unpleasant inference from the late improvements in both our Universities; as, assuredly, eminent and illustrious personages have not sprung up so frequently, as before.

Their strength or grace shall college learning rear,
More than the cassock, or the wig they wear?

Still it is true, that Isis fairly claims
Her names illustrious—now alas! but names.
Or, just to living science, yet may smile
To see her Gaisford, and her Elmsley toil;
From ancient bards clear misty doubts away,
Nor clog with comments what is clear as day.
Too happy authors; could they 'scape the clutch
Of murd'ring German, and laborious Dutch:
For vast the herd, who urge the curs'd pretence
To mend the reading and expound the sense.
His crude conjectures first a dreamer pours:
A second blots them: and a third restores.
Another comes—he too must shew his taste—
First, second, third, are all alike effac'd.
Thus on your walls, ye prisons of the town,
Fade short-liv'd bills, scarce sooner up, than down:
Obscur'd too soon by heaps of newer stuff,
Quack yields to quack, and puff succeeds to puff!

Still deep divines are ours: and ours the lot
To boast a Peel, a Grenville, and a Scott.
Masters there are, who keep in durance here
Talents most worthy of the widest sphere:
Tutors, as grateful feelings bid me say,
Who want but scope to give their genius play:
Rich in all learning, in religion sound,
With humour wise, with elegance profound;
Who praise, and who pursue the liberal plan,
Which forms at once, the scholar and the man.

He too, was here, whose bright undying ray—
* Why sav'd it not his college from decay?
Yet still that college lives—though empty halls,
And silent eloquence of mould'ring walls,
Tell, how one doom awaits the great and sage;
And Science yields to Fashion and to Age:—
Yet still it lives—the memory of that name
Secures a bright eternity of fame;
To patriots dear shall be the patriot's home,
And where Fox was, oblivion dares not come!

* Hertford College.

C. Well then, my friend, almost we are agreed;
Our words at variance, but the same our creed.
And you, methinks, although a Whig in part,
Love Church, and State, and Isis too, at heart.
Yet why her faults—if faults she has—proclaim,
Foe to her rules, and traitor to her fame?

P. Because I wish those faults to have an end:
Because I am no flatt'rer, but her friend:
Because I know, that real foes deride,
With sneering jest, her bigotry and pride;
Tell, how her boasted learning keeps confin'd
The growth of reason, and the stretch of mind;
How Locke was banish'd in contemptuous sort,
And Gibbon found but "prejudice and port."

C. Name then the means.—*P.* Good Sir, I don' pretend:
All may deplore, what very few can mend.
Pow'r must reform: 'tis mine alone to see
That such things are, and wish them not to be:
'Tis mine to wish, that Science, just and plain,
Should drop her errors, and extend her reign;

Pure Mathematics fix the mind of youth
On the firm basis of eternal truth;
Be scann'd Weight's, Number's, Figure's, Motion's laws,
And from the vast effects inferr'd th' Almighty cause:
Sublime Philosophy shine clear, and fraught
With power of words, and energy of thought;
Yet none be deem'd, in learning's seat, to waste
Their hours on classic elegance and taste;
On Helicon's fair dreams, whose soft control
Refines all worldlier feelings of the soul!
Thus form'd and strengthen'd, Science rears her throne,
By sceptics dreaded, and to fools unknown.
Oh, Oxford! mighty with majestic tow'rs,
Lovely with shade of academic bow'rs—
Thus may'st thou draw new dignity from age;
Thus claim thy part in history's brightest page;
Defend Religion, and instruct the State,
The first in wisdom, as the first in weight.
Heroes shall hence, and legislators rise,
Bold in the field, and in the council wise:
Here native bards to future time convey
The mighty magic of the moral lay:

Here England's sons, while life is fresh and bright,
With virtue, peace; with study, blend delight;
Mature taste, feeling, principle; and raise,
With feasts of eld, the fire of younger days;
Then men, and patriots, deaf to factious brawls;
Foremost, where honour or their country calls;
To her and heav'n their ripen'd talents yield,
And run their high career on glory's ample field!
As, first, the rower's inexperienc'd strength
Plies the small skiff the safer Cherwell's length;
Soon, proud of skill, assembled crowds he braves,
Where silver Isis boasts her broader waves;
What time his course the summer sun has stay'd,
And softer evening spreads the gath'ring shade;
While beauty walks the banks; and music round
Sheds o'er the heart th' enchanting pow'r of sound;
And gazers, from each hall and college stand,
Cheer their own boat, and anxious urge to land;
When back from Iffley the swift oars are heard,
Dash in the stream,—though scarce the stream is stirr'd—
The steersman shouts; the gallant crew rows on;
And toil is pleasure, if the race be won.

As, here, young Isis rolls, in laughing pride,
Through classic scenes her unpolluted tide;
With more of beauty than of grandeur flows;
Sounds but of joy disturb the calm repose:
Soon ships and commerce crowd the mightier streams,
And deck the bosom of majestic Thames.

END OF THE SECOND DIALOGUE.

THE

OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE THIRD.

THE

OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE THIRD.

C. Oh youth! our loveliest yet most dangerous state*—
Season of joy—but crisis of our fate—
The age for action, and the age to please;
To think with energy, or learn with ease—
When now in swifter course the life-drops run;
Boyhood scarce past, or manhood scarce begun;
When the soul's bias, tone, and strength, are form'd;
Our vice deep-rooted; or our virtue warm'd:

* This dialogue may appear at first to have little or no connection with the preceding:—the intent of it, however, is to shew, that the notorious follies or vices of other places, and the manifest utility of Universities for the particular period of life which is usually spent there, is the strongest argument, that the system and institutions of those Universities should be as perfect as possible, and that none of the mischief and error should be there admitted, which is elsewhere condemned and lamented.

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And all our contrarieties combine
Of good and ill; of human and divine!—
Thou spring of life, when as in nature's spring,
Their chains around us love and beauty fling;
Through hope's fair medium ripening joys we view,
And ev'ry object bears its brightest hue;
While life's dark shades we fondly, madly, deem
The coward's bugbear, or the dotard's dream:
When toil and fear our thrilling hearts defy,
And all seems possible—except to die.
Youth! when in fancy's radiant visions shine
The high resolve, the glorious great design;
And seeks th aspiring mind with aim sublime
Splendour in good, magnificence in crime!
Thou! who must colour all our future life
With inward joy or woe; repose or strife:
When all our passions war within for sway,
Or rule like ancient chiefs, by turns a day;
Ambition, pleasure, love of ease, or fame,
Divide the soul, and mark the changing frame:
When virtue's crown by noblest deeds is won,
Or man is lost, and woman is undone!

Youth! must thou now be left with none to guide
Thy erring steps, or check thy eager pride?
Wild, inexperienc'd, tread the fatal course
Which leads to years of deep yet vain remorse?
At thine uncertain age, must man be thrown
On life's vast sea, a stranger, and alone;
See but the waves serene, the surface fair,
Nor deem of danger, wreck, and ruin there;
Yet sink with storms above, and rocks beneath,
Too late for flight—how premature for death?

As some sad traveller, where India lies
With sandhills waving in the sparkling skies,
Views in his path some lovely lake appear,
Tremblingly smooth, and beautifully clear;
Breathes the short vow; uplifts the pious hand;
And rushes eager onward to the sand!*

P. Not Œdipus himself could half divine
Your hidden sense—and so it must be fine!

* See "Elphinstone's Account of Caubul."

But leave to mighty ancients, if you please,
These comet-tail'd, long-winded, similes:
Though bright and varied were your moving tropes,
As the gay figures of kaleidoscopes;
Yet cast, my friend, these lyric flights away,
And tell us plainly what you mean to say.

C. A power there is, a vast pervading power,
Which rules our natal, and our final hour;
Rears through the world her omnipresent form,
Can pierce the country, or the town can storm.
Sooner shall fancy's wildest dreams be true,
That Europe's arts may bloom at Tombuctoo;
That Afric's central sands shall lie display'd,
And joy descend to Parke and Tuckey's shade;
That northern ice shall melt; nor aught deny
Ripe clust'ring grapes beneath the British sky;
That man shall nature's mysteries unrol,
And view the needle puzzled at the pole—
Than shall that pow'r unknown dishonour'd lie,
Her glories wither, or her essence die.

That power is Folly—dar'st thou, then, to sneer
If such a goddess finds a temple here,
Where are, perhaps, some few oblations made,
While all around whole hecatombs are paid;
And blindly bid us range the world, to shun
A form, which fills all space beneath the sun?—
You know, when once a witling dar'd deride
The Romish tenets, how the priest replied:
"Rail on—our dreams of purgatory curse—
"Young man! you may go farther and fare worse."

P. Haply I roam, with anxious hope to find
In change of place forgetfulness of mind.

C. Go, then! go youth of England! doff the gown;
Drink, unrestrain'd, the poisons of the town!
Quote the last poem, and affect to feel
Kean's glance of fire, the sigh of soft O'Neill:—
Lounge at the play—your mighty souls attune
To the pure pleasures of the chaste saloon:
Or talk with high-born emphasis of slang,
How Drouet play'd, or charming Fodor sang!

Go: break a lamp, and bid the watchmen bleed,
If the dull rascal blame the manly deed:
Or should your thoughts to higher aims ascend,
Seduce the orphan, and betray the friend;
Bask in the sunshine of a venal smile,
Though fame, health, fortune, virtue, sink the while;
And, deaf to fools, who urge you to retrench,
Live on, like men, or out—or in the Bench!
Such feats of manhood, who would e'er control?
Sublime o'erflowings of the gen'rous soul!
Go: in your fathers find ten thousand faults—
Unhappy men! they never learnt to waltz:
They dar'd not half to game—they never knew
True taste in dress, philosophy, vertù!—
Yet other maxims taught those sires to rise
Polite with learning, and with virtue wise:
Constraint matur'd their energy; and gave
Honour in life, and life beyond the grave.
Go: your enlighten'd breasts no more inspire
With Virgil's majesty or Homer's fire;
But pore o'er glitt'ring Scott's unvaried hues,
Or gloomy Byron's misanthropic muse.

And quitting Grecian genius, bold and free,
Admire, great Wordsworth, thy simplicity!
Go: see mankind, and mark how vice is grown
Ripe in the country, and refin'd in town;
Prouder than virtue stalks in open view,
And from its hardness takes a polish too!
There with dark falsehoods point the sland'rous pen;
For spies are there "all honourable men!"
There aid the good old cause of blest reform,
And scorn to clear the heav'ns—but with a storm!
There patriot impotence of anger whet,
With pious Hone, and Wooller, and Burdett:
Learn the dread watch-words, which enflame the mob,
"The monstrous taxes," and "the dirty job;"
"Woes of the poor," "corruption of police,"
"Disgrace in conquest," and "distress in peace;"
With "Sinecures," "Debt," "Pensions," strain the throat,
Then hint; "th' Election comes: you have a vote."

Here, griev'd I own, we lag behind the age;
Scarce learn the soft corruptions of the stage;

Scarce catch the follies of the great and fair,
Too fine and delicate for country air;
Scarce know how vast in mind, in form how big,
The female giant, or the sapient pig;
Still dine at five; and almost honour still
A country-dance as much as a quadrille!

P. Nay, nay: you libel Oxford. *C.* Yes: in sooth
If the worst libel is the greatest truth.
Fools that we are, who, while our patriots say,
That England scarcely can subsist a day;
While they, and ministers, by diff'rent tricks,
Both make alike a trade of politics:
While French, like frogs, scarce let their log remain,
But wish the crane to be their king again:
While Prince, or Duke, by pistol fears to fall,
Which makes no sound, and which contains no ball;
While corporations, worshipful, and great,
Like Homer's heroes, dine, and then debate;
And some loud man, the common council's boast,
Roars out a revolutionary toast;

Here still—though ruin's flood rolls on the while—
Calmly, incredulously, madly smile:
Infatuate still, eat, drink, and sleep in peace;
Nor seek for such despair a desperate release!
No German plays, on points of honour nice,
Here bid us weep at unsuccessful vice:
No thankless strangers for a song obtain
What thousand starving Britons crave in vain:
There in the sea of follies are you lost
Without a guide, a compass, or a coast.

P. Good Sir, you rave! how swift your scandal flows,
And like a wheel, from its own motion glows!

C. Have I not cause, while London greets our eyes
A very Babel of absurdities;
Which first like spawn in treach'rous embryo lie;
Then burst to life, increase, and multiply;
In vast variety of figure swarm,
And rear their monstrous heads, like sea-hogs in a storm.
Poor Satire fails astonish'd stagger'd there,
And, like weak scent, evaporates in air:

There fights with shadows—for none own the wound,
But, smiling, see the stingless jest go round:
Thought by each fool to hit another's whim,
Who walks a mere fac simile of him.
None sins so deeply by design or chance,
But thousands more will keep in countenance.

For say, ye mighty great, or sparkling fair,
Who come to see your kindred—and to stare:
Admire our awful structures, doubly grac'd
By your soft tones of sentiment and taste;
Or love your own more polish'd airs to shew
To the gay pedant, and the stripling beau!
Ye, fresh with all the well-bred whims of town!
Say, what new follies have you brought us down?
What mighty fashion, or ephemeral rage,
Reigns in the park, assembly, court, or stage?
Yet why inquire?—alas! ye cannot tell—
Your newest follies, ere you reach'd us, fell;
Yet fell like kings—for others straight arise
To fill the throne, and folly never dies.

Not half so mutable our sky appears,
The creed of statesmen; or thy Deys, Algiers;
As London follies—since they change no less
Than ladies change their whims, or fops their dress.

P. You wish, perchance, while all in common bands
Of folly fetter'd, join heads, hearts, and hands,
Your satire, like electric shock, could fall
Unspent in force, and felt alike by all:
Wish them one neck, like Romans long ago,
And bid them perish at a single blow!

C. I do, by heav'n!—who lives, but must be grave,
While in such triumph vice and madness rave;
Mount the gilt car, where dragg'd with drooping mien
Poor captive virtue mourns the pompous scene!
Who mix with men, too true the proverb find,
That cities are the graves of human kind.

There fancied bliss, the "full-grown child," delights,
And varied pleasure ev'ry sense invites;

No more the country and dull rules confine;
Freely he quaffs the unforbidden wine;
While earthly Houries court his swimming eyes,
He seems to range some Paynim Paradise:
Luxurious raptures all his thoughts employ,
And promise immortality of joy.
But pleasure's torrent bears him but to pain;
And he would stop, or turn—alas! in vain.
His endless joys dissolve, like smoke, in air;
And leave the bitter dregs of deep despair.
Yet choice, at least, of evil meets his gaze;
And ruin waits him in unnumber'd ways.—

For look on him to honour lost and peace,
Who lives but in a wanton's wild caprice;
Who views her beautiful, and trusts to find
As fair a soul in such a frame enshrin'd;
In life's full tide inglorious loves to lie,
And reads his fate in woman's changing eye:
To her devotes, as years of folly roll,
His health, his hours, his reason, and his soul:

Gives her his all—and when that all is giv'n,
Where are his raptures, making earth a heav'n?—
Youth, fortune, wasted; health, and fame, decay'd;
She scorns the wreck of manhood she has made.
Then soon his mental agony bespeak
The burning forehead, and the sunken cheek;
And when not all his offerings could suffice
Upon the shrine of fashionable vice,
Faded and lost his infamous renown—
The prison holds the refuse of the town!

But who could think, that evil might be found
Where elegance, taste, splendour, breathe around;
That ruin waits him with the wealthy lord
Of open heart, and hospitable board?
Yet see the feast in massy silver shine,
In costly goblets flow the mantling wine;
Too pleas'd, he drinks his reason far away
In mad enjoyment, which his purse must pay!
For lo! the cards, or dice, their entrance make,
To speed the hours, and keep the guests awake.

Who such blest knowledge would not gladly choose,
To play with spirit and with temper lose?
His host enriching at each luckless bet,
He leaves his house—how deeply in his debt!

Perchance some mother boasts, with art refin'd,
The charming daughter's temper, form, and mind:
The charming daughter, with half-blushing face,
All youth, and softness, harmony and grace:
With languid meltingness of speech and air,
Most dutifully aids the mother's snare:
Each female art and blandishment is prov'd,
Till the dup'd victim thinks himself belov'd:
O'er the coy maid his ardent sighs prevail,—
Whose charms, long years before, had been for sale.
Or some ambitious beauty leads him on
With fatal smile—till heart and soul are gone:
Then proudly frowns; and feeds in triumph vain
The devilish pleasure of inflicting pain.
Here 'tis not so. *P.* How blest are they, who see,
Or make a pleasure in necessity!

Yet woman raises man's sublimer aim
To high renown, and honourable fame,
To virtue's heights by virtue's steps to rise—
Her love the motive, and her smile the prize!

C. Alas! young man! these idle dreams remove:—
Long, long, are gone the golden days of love.
Where now the youth, that ardent pow'r impels
To leap from Leucas' rock, or swim the Dardanelles?—
Now love is ever fortune's minion; now
Gold is the idol to which love must bow:
His throne and temple is the looking-glass,
Where hours his self-adoring votaries pass;
Enamour'd gaze upon their form and dress,
Themselves enough for their own happiness!—
Or walk abroad, where needs no speech to say,
What paragons, in self conceit, are they!
Oh! though each age has form'd, by different rules,
Its wilful, grave, premeditated fools;
Sure such a race our fathers never saw,
When Templars knew of dress alone the law!

For now, enthron'd with systematic reign,
In the strong outworks of a coxcomb's brain,
Rais'd by gradations sure, but never slow,
"The force of folly can no farther go:"
And thus in men might even sceptics find
Complete perfectibility of mind.*

Yet right was Horace: words but live their day,
Like us, they flourish, and like us, decay.
Alas! the greatest names to fashion bow:—
For what were Loungers once, are Dandies now.†

* One of Madame de Staël's favourite theories is the perfectibility of the human mind.—It is an excellent thing, that we are able to set the question at rest almost by demonstration, or, in fact, an appeal to the evidence of our senses: for if we take it for granted, as we fairly may, that the whole stretch of a coxcomb's intellect has ever been employed in meditations how to make himself ridiculous; it clearly follows, that the human mind, in this respect at least, has attained absolute perfection in the nineteenth century.

† The existence of Dandies is of no long antiquity; as will fully appear, if we deduce, in the manner of Aristotle, an argument from the name: if the present appropriation of it had been known three years ago, the author of Guy Mannering would never have given the appellation of Dandin Dicmont to so very un-dandy a gentleman.

And oh! no more, ye gownsmen vainly try
With Dandies of St. James's air to vie!
In vain, ye Oxford fops, ye bring to view
What pains, and practice, stays, and starch can do:
Or ye of Granta, who with fatal speed
Hie to Newmarket on the stumbling steed:
Still ye retain, against the finish'd plan,
Some easy motions of the natural man.
There men of law to fashion's court alone
Give all their time:—and time is all their own—
There heroes, though in peace, with warlike mien
Shew in the fight how brave they must have been;
And love, still mindful of their former trade,
To storm, or mine, the virtue of a maid.
Stiff they proceed, and patient under pain,
Proud of their shame, and of their folly vain:—
Yet praise is theirs,—if praise on toil attend;
And it be glorious, to attain our end:—
Their high ambition was to shine in dress:
And even envy owns their full success.
In pleasure, till it palls, runs on their time,
And life throughout is one long pantomime.

Yet death, unwelcome, rears his form between,
And clouds with tragic woe the final scene—
As while high Congress sat o'er ruin'd France,
And fix'd the fate of Europe—or a dance—
French, English, Russian, Austrian, Polonese,
Strove some to legislate—and some to please;
Adjusted realms—or dress; the balance set
Of mighty pow'r, or mightier etiquette;
Asserted empire o'er the fair or great,
As these intrigued for beauty—those for state—
Came Elba's chief who rul'd the world before,
And bade the varied farce at once be o'er.
Yet what the pride of wealth or pride of birth,
Unless the mind shall give these cyphers worth?
'Tis cha..ce, which must our diff'rent stations rear,
'Tis chance, which makes the porter, or the peer.
Take from the scale all outward things away,
The crude remarks, which fools may think or say;
Th' applause of crowds, who place in equal rank,
Madman, or hero, sage or mountebank:
Then birth and beauty, honour, wealth, and fame,
Obscurity, want, meanness, weigh the same.

Exhaust the air—and see, when all is fled,
How falls in equal time the feather and the lead.

Yet some there are, who wilder thoughts pursue,
Careless to be undone, or to undo.
In cities.—*P.* Why on cities lay the stress?

C. First from the number—next the idleness.
Nature ordains, that idlers should begin,
From very lack of worthier things, to sin;
Not streams to seas more naturally flow,
Or Newton's apple sought the ground below.
Young, rich, inactive, ripe for thoughtless crime,
How shall they speed the tortoise-footed time?
How shun themselves: and on the world let loose
Their wanton appetites?—they must seduce.
The heartless fop his fiendish schemes combines,
And even churches serve the curs'd designs;
Till in some fatal hour of love betray'd,
Sinks the long-sought, the long-reluctant maid;
Then leaves her, proud to break a lover's oath,
And devils triumph in the fall of both.

P. Surely, my friend, you frame a fancied tale,
To give yourself that charming task to rail.

C. No: I have known, of reason now bereft,
Who thus was sought and courted, lost and left:
One have I known, and oft to fancy's view
Will memory bring that lovely form anew;
As pure she shone, in calmer happier time,
Above suspicion, as unknown to crime;
Delight and love, where'er she mov'd, inspir'd;—
A father gaz'd and tremblingly admir'd!
For her's the form, that oft at dead of night,
In heav'nly vision glads the dreamer's sight;
Or such as floats in wounded Moslem's eyes
To gild his death, and form his Paradise.
Her's was the smile, which ev'ry gloom could cheer,
Bid anguish cease, and make destruction dear.
Her's was the lip, which breath'd of more than heav'n,—
Though none that lip might touch and be forgiv'n.
Her's was the eye, whose mild and melting glance
Could, with it's silent speech, the soul entrance;—
The lightning flash, at summer ev'ning sent,
Quick, but serene—and bright, but innocent.

Her's was the timid bashfulness of face,
Which sheds o'er lovely forms the loveliest grace;
Mix'd with the conscious self-approving smile
Which beauty wears, when all adore the while—
The voice in native melody complete,
Touchingly, deeply, exquisitely sweet;
The soft light step, which none might safe behold,
With the rich charms of nature's finest mould;
Young, sparkling, playfulness of speech and air,
Which told a breast unknown to crime and care;
The guileless soul, as happy and as pure
As infant thought—the virtue, as secure—
Yet deeper feelings of affection strove
Deep in that heart, too capable of love.

What is she now?—how rack'd with bitterest pain,
With faded person, and bewilder'd brain!
Yet hating reason, while she feels the tear
Of sorrowing sympathy, or insult's sneer;
Doom'd friendless, hopeless, desolate to roam,
Lost to her pride, her virtue, and her home.
Worse than an orphan—for a father's fame
Sinks with her own, and shares his daughter's shame.—

What shall she do?—belov'd, receiv'd no more,
No pangs or tears can former peace restore.
Nor this the worst—another scene is nigh,
Too sad for words to paint, or thought to fly;
One dreary dark despondency of grief,
Which grows with life, or seeks in death relief.

Oh thou! by whom that lost one was betray'd!
How hast thou marr'd what heaven so lovely made!
Now what thou can'st not cure, in silence see—
For pity must be mockery from thee.
Yet think, ere deeper sunk in guilt's abyss,
If mercy can forgive a deed like this.

The world forgives not her—for one offence
The world shuts mercy's gate on penitence:
And like the brand, which seals a villain's shame,
Forbids return to virtue and to fame.
Yet shame to those the merciless—to them
Who, proud in untried virtue, dare condemn;
To such, as still in folly's circle run,
Too dull to feel, too cold to be undone:

Or scarcely chaste in thought, yet safe from harm;
Merely because they want the power to charm:
Who with disgust, or mingled joy, and hate,
Hear of the blighted name, the ruin'd fate
Of all that once was beautiful—the eye
More bright than their's—the birth, perchance, as high;
Who still disdain the fallen fair to raise,
But think by cruelty to merit praise.
Oh! let them know, that mercy is the grace,
Which pours a ray divine o'er mind and face.
O'er others woes, in sorrow let them pause,
Nor whilst they scorn to pity, help to cause.

And shame, deep shame to custom's partial laws,
Which crown the villain with insane applause!
While, as he triumphs in his damn'd success,
Men still admit, and women still caress.
Where is the man, who can his soul inspire
With withering words, and point his pen with fire,
To shew those arts, which female youth beguile,
How poorly, meanly, despicably vile,
Which but require some dev'lish dark disguise,
The heart of marble and the tongue of lies?

P. If thus the town displease, the country see
Rich with the charms of native scenery:
Where heav'n's own beauties mock the toils of art,
And innocence reigns mistress of the heart.

C. Yet in the country, to the careless eye,
All nature's beauties unregarded lie;
There the fond mother's misdirected pain
Fears lest her darling should fatigue his brain;
The foolish father takes him to the field,
To shew what learning rural sports may yield;
And deems him soon in all true knowledge ripe—
Since he can tell a partridge from a snipe.
Soon learns the son these high delights to sip,
Turns huntsman, sportsman, boxer, jockey, whip.
Soon, like Egyptians, as old tales declare,
His hard skull thickens in the sun and air;
And proves it true, that brains, or bright or dull,
Bear an inverse proportion to the skull.
Soon, dead to feeling, round his heart-strings freeze
The hope of pleasure, and the wish to please,

Unless he courts in some sequester'd place
A shepherdess of no Arcadian race.
He drinks and shoots—youth fades before he thinks,
And age approaches, while he shoots and drinks.
Then reigns stern despot of his little town,
And they, who hate his person, fear his frown.
Till sore is curs'd retirement's loveliest scene
With petty politics, intrigues, and spleen;
His vain conceit the base dependents fan,
Echo his jests, and make him more than man.

P. Then, leaving town and country—since there wait
Inseparable ills on either state—
Let young men travel.—*C.* England can make fools;
Alas! we need not go to foreign schools.
What! shall the youth with mind unform'd be sent
"To glean the follies of the continent?"
There learn to dance, and quit his country's cause,
Abuse her church, her government, and laws.
Proceed, in self-opinion's Lethe dipp'd,
Dup'd, libell'd, flatter'd, ridicul'd, and stripp'd.
Proceed—and as he makes a shew or shift—
Be ruin'd by expense, or curs'd for thrift:

Then homeward hie, a traveller complete,
One perfum'd mass of falsehood, cant, conceit;
Engross discourse—whatever you advance
Cry out with Sterne "these things are best in France;"
Describe the Louvre: tell us o'er and o'er,
What thousand scribblers better told before;
Compunction, mercy banish'd, fill his tours
With a long list of dangers, feats, amours;
Britons bewail, as barbarous, unrefin'd,
Mere Goths—at least a century behind—
Himself with gait half walk, half dance; and clad
In garb, which looks like foppery run mad;
With speech—adorn'd with many a mongrel oath
Nor French, nor English—but the dregs of both—
A tongue which neither God nor man has made,
In such a tone, that Cæsar might have said,
As once he told the mouthing reader dryly—
"Sir! if you mean to sing, you sing most vilely."

P. Yet they, methinks, might best in life discharge
Their parts, who view this breathing scene at large;
See man's great outline by one nature made,
Yet various nations take a various shade;

As climate, laws, religion, change the hue,
And diff'rent lands their diff'rent arts pursue;
Trace systems, manners, men, the world all o'er,
Then, from the contrast, love their own the more;
And back, from realms survey'd, contented come,
To guard their country, and enjoy their home.

C. This may be well—but wants experience long,
The judgment ripe, and thought, from habit, strong:
Of all the pests, in whom weak reason errs,
The worst are young unfledg'd philosophers!

P. Well then, my friend, we but come round at last
For this the sum of all the converse past;
You shew what follies through the land abound,
And prove how ruin waits us all around,
Expose the country, and the town—yet say
That fools who go, are worse than fools who stay:
In short as other nations hunt their deer,
Confine the circle, till you drive us here.
Let then this spot at least be reason's own,
And Oxford sages guard the sacred throne.

Shall folly shine of more than mortal birth,
Yet wisdom find no dwelling-place on earth;
But roam with wounded wing and bleeding breast,
No home for refuge, and no spot for rest?
Oh! lest the wanderer seek her native heav'n,
Be here that home prepar'd, that refuge given!

END OF THE THIRD DIALOGUE.

THE

OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE FOURTH.

THE

OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE FOURTH.

P. Once more, my friend, on calm discussion bent,
Come, let us use the reason God has lent;
Idly once more converse an hour away,
And please ourselves, whate'er the rest may say:
But sick at length, and weary to descry
How single follies bubble, break, and die,
At petty faults no longer let us shoot,
But boldly raise the axe and strike the root;
Prove, from a ground-work weak, and badly laid,
How frail must be the superstructure made;
Assert thought's liberty, and judgment's right,
And drag reluctant error full to light.

C. Where are you now?—why let such phrenzy bear
Your hurrying course of mind—you know not where?
In time desist—all think your words the dreams
Of wild ambition's disappointed schemes;
That you, like patriots, with no patriot views,
From blighted hopes, and private spleen abuse.

P. So let them think—though wide their fancies fall
'Tis at least something, that they think at all.
But you, who know me, know my nobler aim,
No puny longing for the bubble fame:
Long have I learnt to pass it careless by,
And hear another prais'd without a sigh;
My only wish to tear the mask away,
Till pal[illegible]ied follies fade in open day;
Remove th' illusive film, by which is thrown
O'er learned fraud a splendour not its own.
For who, unmov'd, can see such follies rest,
Because they suit their kind preservers best?
As Indian priests their senseless Pagod raise,
Enrich'd by gifts, which superstition pays;
Or Monks preserv'd with rev'rence scraps of wood,
A malefactor's bones, or marks of blood;

Then "lo! the blessed cross:" or "view," they said,
"The bones of saints, the blood, which martyrs shed!"
The crafty thrive, because the most are blind,
And fatten on the follies of mankind.

C. Still, still, the same—you thus by driblets pour
Your changeless venom to torment the more;
As when slow falls the water, drop by drop,
Permitted neither to flow fast nor stop,
Acutest pangs the writhing victim try,
Torture the most, and let the latest die.

P. No: a good end by honest means I seek,
Condemn'd to see, and not afraid to speak:
And if but small effects attend the few,
'Tis fair to try, what many strokes will do.
For, this the truth—emerg'd from Gothic night,*
First partial Science gave a glimm'ring light:

* If any thing advanced in this Dialogue appears a repetition of what has been said in a former one, the excuse must be, that truth can hardly be told too often; and that the writer wishes in sober seriousness, that these sentiments should make their impression.

When in the cloister's misanthropic shade
The generous vigour of the mind decay'd;
When no bright visions fann'd ambition's flame;
No female smile urg'd manhood on to fame;
But beauteous maids in gloomy convents pin'd;
Their feeling deaden'd—not their souls resign'd—
Conscious of weakness, Popes implanted here
Dark disputations, offspring of their fear;
Scholastic mumm'ry hid, or banish'd, truth,
And poison'd all the common-sense of youth:
There in the maze of subtle jargon lost,
The strongest reason could but err the most;
As through some marsh who strives his way to win,
The more he labours, flounders deeper in.
Some parts are now cast off—and some remain—
Thus incongruity is all we gain:
For till the whole, from base to top, shall fall,
'Twere better nothing had been done at all:
Since then, like Rome, unwieldy, and o'ergrown,
From its own weight had sunk the fabric down:
But some small sense is mix'd, we must allow,
To make the patchwork call'd a system now.

Now Popes are pow'rless—yet our studies trace;
The discipline, views, genius, of the place:
All insufficient, cramp'd, ill-judg'd, appear;
Confin'd, yet tedious; though minute, severe;
With useless forms, and disquisitions fraught;
Yet leaving necessary things untaught.
Rise then, ye Jesuits, and with glad surprise
In Oxford still St. Omers recognise;
Ye sophist Monks, here burst to life anew,
Your sun once set in height meridian view!
Books should teach life; connect the mighty link
Of past, and present; and cause men to think;
But what are they, unless to use applied?
Or what is learning, but as action's guide?
Yet words, not things, from ev'ry book are sought,
To load the mem'ry—not improve the thought—
Dates, places, names, a valley, or a plain,
"Confusion, worse confounded," fill the brain.
The gownsman jumbles in his aching head,
Rivers, long dry; and one-eyed men, long dead;
Kens little points, where still suspicions lurk,
That some old woman must have been at work;

But leaves the gen'ral scope and tenor free
For such—as need not read for a degree:
While modern languages and modern lore,
Languish unknown; or lost, if known before.
Nor this alone—but habit's laws confine
The very course of classic discipline:
The same historians, and one single sage,
Complete monopoly of thought engage;
One only road lies open—all pursue
The same dull round, nor dare to break it through.

Oh! if the letter'd gownsmen never thought
Of learning more, than Alma Mater taught;
This Oxford sage might tell you in a trice
How pigmies fought with cranes, or frogs with mice;
Yet think, perhaps, these gentry fought again
On Stamboul's tow'rs, or Pavia's fatal plain;
Might tell how Jason first his sails unfurl'd,
And coasted for a sheep-skin round the world;
And yet, poor man, might never chance to hear,
Who found, or nam'd, another hemisphere.
He knows, what monsters bred in Scythian frost—
Ask him who peopled England—he is lost.

From him are chemistry's dark secrets hid?
Oh no! he knows what mighty Midas did;
Chemist profound! who gold from all things carv'd;
Yet like his luckless followers nearly starv'd!
And stuff'd with long-liv'd Indian's longer tales,
Might just enquire, if Calmucs live in Wales.
Yet say, shall prejudice uncheck'd preside,
And waye her night-shade in protected pride?
The Stagyrite be confirmation strong,
And Latin Logic mingle right and wrong?

Not long ago, as half asleep I lay,
But dreamt at night the studies of the day,
This vision came. Where Oxford elders sate;
And held their Sanhedrim in solemn state;
In sudden haste an aged form appear'd,
And shook the shadowy honours of his beard:
Though deep dismay'd, he bore in either hand,
Dark, pond'rous tomes; and mov'd in gown and band;
With goodly paunch, and long mis-shapen head,
And seeming, for a spirit, not ill-fed.
Though lines of thought 'twas seldom giv'n to trace
On the wide level of that vacant face;

Now o'er the rueful void disorder came,
Mixture sublime of sorrow, fear, and shame!
" Logic" upon his brow was graven bright;
Yet now his words were natural from fright.
" Hunted by all, despis'd, abus'd, I come—
" You, my last hope—and this, my only home—
" My friends, in sorrow faithful found alone!
" Since Greeks, and Monks, and Jesuits all are gone—
" If e'er I thwarted truth, the mind misled,
" Puzzled the wise, and turn'd the weaker head;
" Oh! view my fallen dignity: and vow
" To shield me from the foes who crush me now!
" Th' ungrateful moderns mock my sore distress;
" With hate relentless Truth and Reason press.
" See, see, e'en now they come!—like ghosts that shun
" The dawn, and vanish at the rise of sun;
" These upstart lights unhappy must I fly,
" Or, bound for ever, steep'd in Lethe, lie.
" Yet save me, save me!—think, how well I taught
" The rights of wrong, and sweet disorder wrought!
" No more must I on Isis' margin sport,
" Make the straight, crooked, and perplex the short!

"No more"—alas! the keen pursuers reach
The king of words, and stop his dying speech.
The sages gaz'd in silence, pitied, wept:
One in advance to save him, boldly stept:
Whom Reason bade, obedient to her laws,
Contend and conquer in a better cause:
Him they bore down to Stygian gloom their prey,
Shrieking his own dilemma all the way!

There let him lie—there make his fav'rite schisms,
Till Styx itself shall echo syllogisms;
My dream, though sent through neither gate, is true;
For thrice I dreamt it—near the morning too.
Yet Oxford, say, without a friend, like this,
And questions framed on false hypothesis;
"Without the smile, from partial logic won,
"Oh! what wert thou?—a world without a sun!"*

C. Come, come, with Gothic times let visions cease:
In God's name, let the dead repose in peace!

* In the opinion of the deepest commentators this is the true reading of the passage in "the Pleasures of Hope:" if so, it should be immediately restored.

Hope not your fame by such device to lift,
The bungling poet's miserable shift:
As some stuck Greek, unable to escape,
Ungrateful, brings his gods into the scrape;
Puts reason, sense, consistency, aside,
And cuts the knot, which could not be untied!
My stomach turns, when forms of giant size
Shake the scar'd earth, and wrapt in clouds arise;
When come the noiseless step, the hollow groans,
The glaring eye-balls, and the rattling bones.
Scarce can we bear, since darker days are o'er,
The ghost of Hamlet, or of Polydore.

But to return—shall ancient rules give way
To ev'ry upstart notion of a day?
Or shall a body of our weight adopt
Each idle theory at random dropt?
Each fresh-blown fancy, knaves or fools invent,
Without sense, reason, thought, experiment?
Like Gall, and Spurzheim, tell the wise or dull;
And measure brains by feeling round the skull?
Owen of Lanark! thy great plans adore,
And live in common, like our sires of yore?

Believe that mind is matter; matter mind;
And veer to ev'ry point with ev'ry wind?
Or would you tear our glorious structure down,
To raise some puny building of your own?
As when some mighty fabric claims a sigh
For the past glories of the days gone by;
Though scarce its strength impair'd; though scarce deface'd
By time the lovely vestiges of taste;
The soulless rustics come, and, one by one,
Strip massy fragments of disjointed stone;
Their barb'rous hands with ceaseless pillage glut,
And spoil the temple to erect the hut!
Thus soon would awful orthodoxy fall,
And Quacks and Methodists be Lords of all.

P. Yet chapels, rear'd in orthodoxy's spite,
Like Gorgon visions, petrify the sight.
But this is nothing;—fools were never few;—
Fools there must be—or what are knaves to do?
Nor can our church a single taunt provoke:
Our bigot learning is the standing joke.

And some there are—nor let their words deceive—
Who laugh a little in the lengthen'd sleeve:
For must we only Aristotle quote,
And all his Treatises be learnt by rote?

C. They strengthen reason. *P.* And can nought be found
To strengthen reason, in itself more sound;
While Bacon, Paley, pour their flood of light,
To shame the doctrines of the Stagyrite?
If nature hints, that time may still unfold
New lights; and wisdom add them to the old;
If I dare think, that science has reveal'd
To Bacon truths, from all before conceal'd;
Where is my crime?—Must reason yield the cause,
If awful Aristotle issues laws;
And, as his royal pupil sway'd mankind,
Would claim despotic empire o'er the mind:—
Nay: more than Philip's son in arms could do,
Would rule by dogmas, and for ever too?
What! in this age, when narrow views are flown,
And thought is free, and bigotry unknown;

This age of licence, when the worst may deem
Their right secure to libel, lie, blaspheme;
Here still shall doctrines, though from sense estrang'd,
Like laws of Medes and Persians, rest unchang'd?
Shall old decisions curb the mind's free scope,
And science own a literary Pope?
No: praise the master genius; but deny
To aught on earth infallibility.

C. Unhappy sage: the shallow moderns' hate!
Too closely wise: too deeply intricate!
What's most unlike themselves, or wrong, or right,
Disgusts them still—Moors paint their devils white.
Yet were it well to boast some better claim,
First learn to understand, then dare to blame.

P. Blame! is then rev'rence of his sacred name,
And wonder at his depth of reason blame?
No: cloth'd in words, strong, plain, precise, where each
Has weight of sense; and scorns the flow'rs of speech:
Nations admir'd the page with science fraught,
And monarchs honour'd what a sage had taught.

His mighty labours mock the march of time,
And tow'r in wisdom's majesty sublime;
Yet from the foolish praise of one dull sect
Who keep what, living, he would now reject;
Champions of error, reason's growth they blight,
And stop the rising beams of younger light.
As some tall mountain, ere the day is done,
Athos, or Atlas, intercepts the sun:
The mighty shade along the shore is thrown,
And clouds the deep with darkness not its own.
But I have done:—no subtle wrangler I:
You boast, like all the rest, Philosophy.

Ah poor Philosophy! thou injur'd name,
On which the dreams of madmen mount to fame;
With which mankind their sev'ral systems dub,
In courts, or wilds, the garden or the tub;
Thou, like thy stone, nor seen, nor understood;
"The greatest evil, or the greatest good:"
Claim'd by all nations—though possess'd by few—
Chaldee, Greek, Scythian, Turk, Chinese, Hindoo:

Something, or nothing: yet with rev'rence heard,
Dissecting now a world, and now a word;
Or measuring earth; or tracing nature's plan;
Combining atoms, or instructing man;
Deist, or Atheist, turning schemes about,
Till feeling, sense, existence seem a doubt:
Quibbling with Pyrrho, or with Plato taught
To lift to heav'n soul, spirit, hope, and thought:
Now sowing discord; now to peace the guide;
The friend of wisdom; or the tool of pride;
Next teaching holier truths, from heav'n proclaim'd,
Than ever reason found, or fancy fram'd:
Or soaring upwards, mid the spheres to stray,
With Newton, Ptolemy, or Tycho Brahe:
More lately seen, with falsehood's baneful breath,
To sever friends, and fill a realm with death;
Proving, that all things differ but in name;
Truth, error, virtue, vice, themselves the same;
And bidding villains triumph in the trust,
That man is mortal, and the soul but dust;
And o'er Religion's prostrate form advance
The hopeless dark divinity of chance!

Oh! sacred sound of ev'ry tongue and clime;
Nor bound by space, nor circumscrib'd by time;
Loud, universal, mighty, like the wind
Which all may feel and hear, but none may find;
Still heard with mingled rev'rence, love, and fear;
Say, heav'n-born Science, say, what art thou here?
Say, dost thou flourish, skill'd in deep intents,
Sublime inventions, nice experiments?
Or dost thou love, as Bacon taught, to trace
The book of Nature with the book of Grace?
Or track the planets, and observe the tide,
High as the heav'n, and as the ocean wide?
Blush, poor Philosophy, oh! blush to own
Thy influence dead, thy very name unknown;
Or only taught, in dull dispute, to brood
O'er names, and terms, a figure, and a mood!

C. Heav'ns! what a show'r of words! how long, and loud,
It rolls, and rumbles, like a thunder-cloud!
Yet sounding words no solid sense may bear:
Loud bursts the bubble only fill'd with air.

And heav'n forbid, that Oxford should advance
To greet the new Philosophy of France:
Or metaphysics English youth should spoil,
The rankest produce of the German soil!
Why name philosophy? with pain we see
What gloomy poets mean it now to be:*

* Whatever may be the poetry of the present age, the philosophy, contained in it, is certainly the most monstrous system ever invented; and if the contagion spreads, it is difficult to say, what will become of generous sympathy, or honourable ambition. It would be an amusing speculation to trace the various characters, which have been exhibited as heroes by different writers in different ages; to mark the distinction between the heroes of Homer and Virgil, Tasso and Ariosto; between the heroes of Gothic enchantment, or romantic chivalry; till we come to the seductive tenderness of the French novelists, or the sickly sentimentality of the German drama. The hero now in fashion is an anomalous being, proud in his own weakness, and deriving a sort of diseased happiness from the consciousness of his own misery; hating the world, and rejoicing in the world's hatred; a being, who by every method in his power brings ruin upon himself, and then pretends to complain of the efficacy of his efforts; with all the extravagant absurdities of a Quixote, but without any of the liberal feelings; who makes personal dignity to consist in every mark of an unamiable temper, or an alarmed conscience, the haggard features, hurried step, and ferocious aspect; and mental dignity, in gloomy

A self-tormenting fiend, which feeds on pain,
Yet dares of misery, which it caus'd, complain;
Whence form'd are men, whose wild ambitious views
Soon "furnish matter for the tragic Muse!"
Too soon they mar the opening scenes of life,
With dark intrigues, and unsuccessful strife:
Blind, warring wishes, set the soul on fire
In the deep chaos of uncurb'd desire;
Till passion reigns on reason's overthrow,
And thought becomes an instrument of woe:
O'er the chill brow still flits th' eternal smile,
Though burning cares consume the heart the while;
As lies on Ætna's breast th' unmelted snow,
Though quenchless flames for ever roll below.
Deep in their souls the furious passions dwell,
And for themselves make their own thoughts a hell.
They mount the various scales of guilt and care
To the full climax of intense despair:
In self-sought death the finish'd drama stops;
And o'er the mangled form the pitying curtain drops.

pride, and senseless despondency. Who would at first think that all this is only another way of disguising the vanity of the human heart?

Not such the old philosophy, whose scope
Was firm endurance, or unwearied hope;
Calm as the majesty of Grecian forms;
Or their pure sky, scarce capable of storms;
Or sternly good, too haughty to complain,
Forbade to feel, or to acknowledge pain:
Or wise with pleasure, and with temperance gay,
Smil'd at the world, and laugh'd its griefs away;
Or daring far above this earth to climb,
Weigh'd heav'n with man; eternity with time;
Trusted their gods' kind providence would last,
And rule the future, as they rul'd the past.
This virtue's essence—hence, they taught, arise
Her grandest, loveliest, most endearing ties:
First to give happiness; this simple law
From nature's scheme the human mind may draw:—
And next to bless it, when to others giv'n,
And view with joy th' indulgent care of heav'n;
Cherish and love all things beneath the sun—
This man should do—for this his God has done.

Oh! if what God has made him, man would be,
Pure in his thoughts, and in his feelings free,

He yet were happy. Who can gaze on earth,
Where mighty nature gives such beauty birth;
Nor feel his soul with calm delight o'erflow,
Nor own her joys our purest bliss below?
The fresh'ning breeze of morning to inhale,
Or softer breathings of the evening gale:
To feel the spring's or summer's charms display'd,
The flow'ry fragrance, or the vocal shade:
View the bright tints of autumn's deep serene,
Or solemn stillness of the winter scene:
To stand entranc'd upon the mountain's brow,
Or near some rapid river's rushing flow;
Whether a pleasing silence hush the air,
Or the wild winds contend and madden there:
To view the earth, and heav'n, and ocean rise
With millions crowding in the pride of life:
And the red sun, like some vast giant, rise;
Or setting, tinge the water and the skies;
Then gaze upon those waters, and that sky,
Which seem to meet at distance to the eye:
[illegible] depths with fires of æther glow,
[illegible]h, as seen above, appear below:

Then upwards gaze; and in the firmament
View stars unnumber'd light the vast extent;
And think how other worlds, beyond, unknown,
Have stars, moons, planets, systems of their own:
All, all is rapturous!—ev'ry feeling, giv'n
From nature pure, refines the soul for heav'n,
Till warm with gratitude it soars above,
In thrilling awe and universal love.
Yet man, these natural feelings all destroy'd,
Makes his own heart a wide and aching void;
And blind to beauty, deaf to music's strain,
Nature for him is beautiful in vain!
And this he calls philosophy:—for this
His breast is clos'd to calm, self-off'ring bliss!
By heav'n! there's not a tribe, that blithely glides
Through the vast ocean's tributary tides:
There's not a beast, that roams the forest, blest
To quench his hunger, and enjoy his rest;
No bird, that loves her native spot; or sweeps
O'er the wide waters of the mighty deeps:
There's not an insect, basking in the sun,
That lives its little day, and dies when day is done,

But what, while blest, pursuing nature's plan,
Might shame the proud philosophy of man.
To them no varied joys their beings give;
Enough for them to live, and feel they live,
But man creates a drearier darker doom,
In self-taught pain, and artificial gloom:
Yet this he calls philosophy—and smiles
If natural bliss some artless breast beguiles!
But why did he, whom Athens deem'd most wise,
Say, "no man can be happy, till he dies?"
For say, is this our reason, this our sense;—
To stop our hearts to nature's influence?
Though pains and sorrows soon must come, to sigh
O'er certain evils, which we cannot fly?
Or darkling rush on voluntary ills,
Till care corrodes, or disappointment chills?
Deaden our feelings, blunt our souls to joy;
Yet proudly grieve that human pleasures cloy?
Oh! wiser he, who sees the mighty sun
High in the heav'ns his course of splendour run;
And thinks his God thus lights the glowing pole,
Till rapturous rev'rence swells his gladden'd soul!

Happier, who views, secure from earthly taint,
The beauteous image of his patron-saint;
Celestial trust, and holy transport, proves;
Gazes entranc'd: at once adores, and loves!
Wiser and happier, that lone rambler nigh,
O'er whom, in diff'rent moods, we smile or sigh;
Though smiles but mock; and seldom is exempt
Compassion's sigh from feelings of contempt!

If, while our footsteps tread some distant scene,
Fond memory lingers where our home has been;
Till years fly backward at her swift control,
And former pleasures soothe the sadden'd soul;
Say, what dear object rises from the spot,
Which childhood lov'd, nor manhood e'er forgot?
Oh, not the pile, where taste with grandeur vies,
And wealth has lavish'd all that art supplies;
But the grey ruin, or the mould'ring stone,
Which tells of happier days, and glories gone.
Thus thou, far hence, our future theme shall be;
And thought shall turn, poor Bickerton, to thee!

While men, like moths, in quick succession bred,
Here shine their little season and are fled:
While all the young, the witty, and the gay,
Pass unlamented, and unmiss'd, away;
Thee, Oxford oft shall name, remember long,
As one, far separate from her vulgar throng;
No worldling thou, of dull lethargic breast,
In thoughts, words, feelings, moulded by the rest;
Thy manlier mind assumes no borrow'd tone—
Whate'er thy weaknesses—at least thy own!
What! though strange visions fire thy wilder'd brain,
Thy dress disorder'd, and uncheck'd thy strain!
What! though some pedant smile to see thee stray
With large umbrella in the clearest day;
Or lounge on Isis' banks; and feel no awe
To sit mid sages of the Church and Law!
Or, if thou lov'st in idly pensive mood
O'er human woes and vanities to brood,
And half to anger, half to mirth inclin'd,
Upbraid the crimes and madness of mankind;
Should he, to make his own dull sense allow'd,
Pity thy weakness, in that pity proud;

Or dare, unconscious of his own estate,
Insult with seeming sympathy thy fate;
Still reason's self might bid thee not repine—
If fame be worth our wishes—thou hast thine!
And oh! if radiant fancy's meteor gleam
Can gild the colouring of thy darkest dream;
If hope can cheer thee, till thou leav'st behind
The loss of station, and the wreck of mind;
If thou canst rest, while others seek the pole,
To chase their languid listlessness of soul;
If thou canst laugh, while all around are sad,
And very reason drives the wisest mad;
Oh, surely, then our feelings chang'd should be—
Thou pity us—and we must envy thee!

P. Aye—but, my friend, our poets only strive
To fire the fancy, keep the soul alive:
Sworn foes to grammar, 'twere the worst offence
To think that ought they said was vulgar sense.
Besides, you reason surely much amiss,
To use a mode of argument like this.

For what, though thousand follies round you view—
Another's fault is no excuse for you.
First heal yourselves:—they still the loudest rail
At others' frailties, who themselves are frail.
Shrink as you may, the question still recurs;
Are there not points in which the system errs?
Are there not errors, which reflect disgrace
On all the studies, where they hold a place;
Which to wish gone all thinking minds agree?—
And if there are, why cease they not to be?
On this must rest, o'erpast our weary way,
The scope of all I said, or meant to say:
To this, in plain, decisive terms reply—
Yield if you must—and if you can, deny!

C. No: there are not; the system, branch and root
Is good complete, perfection absolute.

P. Enough, my friend!—raise, Oxford, raise thy pride!
One of thy sons, by heav'n, is satisfied!
What! though the nation smile, that Dons approv'd
Move, in dull state, as Dons before them mov'd;

And deeming reason useless, thought insane,
Give their free agency to heav'n again;
They scorn the laughter loud, the murmur deep;
And, nobly callous to derision, sleep!
What, though the world no more thy name revere—
Thou still disdain'st its unenlighten'd sneer;
Canst still thy mumm'ry, forms, and logic prize;
And praise the most, what most the rest despise;
As some fond mother fosters in her breast
And ever loves the weakest child the best!
To me 'tis nothing: weal, or woe betide,
My mind is wayward, and the world is wide.
I go: your life may better fates attend!
Farewell, my country, and adieu, my friend!

C. Go then infatuate! go, and cease to claim
All hopes of praise, or profit, wealth, or fame;
And when intrusive disappointment rears
Her thousand shapes, and dark in all appears;
When thy soul blighted, and thy vigour gone,
Still impotent ambition lingers on,

Then shall this thought a double pang impart—
None but thyself has made thee, what thou art!

P. I ask no more; whate'er my fate may be,
Still be that fate procur'd by none but me:
Still be it mine to rise or fall alone—
My good, or evil fortune,—still my own!
Now the bright beams of earlier hope are fled:
If fame e'er fir'd me—it is cold and dead:
Yet should approval deign awhile to raise
These unambitious toils; be this my praise.
No secret malice, no distemper'd spleen,
Has gall'd me on to plant a wound unseen;
No wish to taint a younger breast prevail'd,
That none might prosper, where myself had fail'd:
But by no ties of prejudice confin'd,
I claim'd the charter of th' unfetter'd mind;
Deem'd mine own senses things not giv'n in vain,
And judg'd, as careless to be judg'd again;
Flatter'd no follies, and no honours sought;
But freely utter'd, what I freely thought!

C. Kind heav'n, and sober sense, the rest defend!
From thoughts, like thine—and thine in time amend!
At last we but pursue the gen'ral plan;
Talk long and loud, and end as we began.

THE END.

Munday and Slatter, Printers, Oxford.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 04 January, 2016